DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 499 JC 840 108

AUTHOR	Seidman, Earl; And Others
TITLE	The Work of Community College Faculty: A Study through In-Depth Interviews. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	Massachusetts Univ., Amherst. School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY	EXXON Education Foundation, New York, N.Y.; National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Sep 83
GRANT	NIE-G-81-0056
NOTE	689p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF04 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Faculty; Community Colleges; Counselors; *Faculty College Relationship; Females; Interviews; Job Satisfaction; Liberal Arts; Minority Groups; Personal Narratives; Reentry Students; *Teacher Background; *Teaching (Occupation); Two Year Colleges; Vocational Education Teachers

ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a study conducted to explore the nature and meaning of the work of community college faculty through a process of in-depth phenomenological interviewing of 76 faculty and staff and 24 students from community colleges in Massachusetts, New York, and California. Section 1 provides an overview of the study, including a discussion of the social, political, and economic context in which community colleges operate. In addition, this section presents the study methodology, including a rationale for the approach and information on the selection of participants, the interview process, and the method of composing individual profiles. Sections 2 through 4 focus on particular faculty or student groups, providing introductory remarks; profiles of the individuals representing these groups; and commentary on the profiles and what they reflect about the community college experience. Section 2 focuses on liberal arts faculty in the areas of English, humanities, math, science, and social science; section 3 examines the work of career education faculty, emphasizing the fields of secretarial and business education, nursing and dental hygiene, and industrial technology; and section 4 presents varied perspectives on the community college experience, looking at counselors, minority faculty, second career faculty, and returning women students. Section 5 provides conclusions about the interviewing process and its results. Appendices provide data on study participants. (HB)

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The Work of Community College Faculty:

A Study Through In-Depth Interviews

by

Earl Seidman, Patrick J. Sullivan
and
Mary B. Schatzkamer

FINAL REPORT

to the

National Institute of Education

Grant Number NIE - G-81-0056

JC 840 108

School of Education
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Amherst, Massachusetts 01003

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Mary B. Schatzkamer

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A Note on Authorship of this Report:

Chapters one, two, fourteen, fifteen, and the introduction and commentary for all chapters except twelve and thirteen were written by Earl Seidman. The introduction and commentary for chapter twelve were written by Patrick J. Sullivan. The introduction and commentary for chapter thirteen were written by Mary B. Schatzkamer. The process for generating the material to be used in the individual profiles of participants is described in chapter two. Sullivan and Schatzkamer took major responsibility for the initial shaping of the profiles. All three authors shared in the final process of composing the profiles.

Acknowledgments

The material in this report is based upon work supported by the Exxon Education Foundation and by the National Institute of Education under grant number NIE G-81-0056. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Exxon Education Foundation or the National Institute of Education.

While responsibility for this report lies with the authors, no project of this scope could be carried out without the cooperation and consideration of many colleagues and associates. We wish to acknowledge the extensive and crucial support our efforts received from the University of Massachusetts Computer Center and in particular from its Director, Dr. Conrad Wogrin, its Associate Director , Charles D. Lyman, and Staff Consultant, Pat Driscoll.

Richard L. Morrill of the University Library and James Johnson of the University Office of Grants and Contracts contributed their professional expertise at key times in the project.

In the School of Education, Dean Mario Fantini, Associate Dean Richard J. Clark and Grants Coordinator Sharon Gorman offered timely and valuable support. Staff members Linda Sicard, Sheryl Jablonski, Terry Eddy, and Teri Chyz each made efforts on behalf of the project which we appreciated.

Professors Myron Glazer, Christopher Hurn, Byrd Jones, and Rudine Sims read an early version of chapter eleven of the report. Professor Grace Flisser read a draft of chapter three. Their reading was careful, their comments useful, and we appreciate their efforts.

Professor Gene Winter of the State University of New York at Albany's Two-Year College Development Center offered us an excellent overview of the New York State system of community colleges and facilitated our access to them. A number of other individual faculty and staff members in New York State, California, and Massachusetts facilitated our contact with potential participants at their colleges. We wish to acknowledge their key contribution to our work. Without their willingness to listen, to think through the implications of what we were asking, and their knowledgeable and sensitive cooperation, the project could not have moved forward in the same way.

Mary Ellen Kelly broke new ground for us in her interviews of students in the Exxon Foundation phase of our work. An interview she conducted provided the material for one of the profiles in chapter thirteen. Kate Finnegan offered a valuable perspective as we began working with the material we had collected. Joan Snowdon contributed sensitive and skilled editorial work and a necessary fresh perspective as we completed the project.

These acknowledgments could not be complete without expressing our appreciation for the work of Linda Papirio, the project secretary. Her sensitive and careful transcriptions of the hours of audiotapes, her mastery of the university computer word processor system for the composition of this Final Report, and her steadiness and perceptivity are only the most observable aspects of the significant contribution she consistently made to our moving forward in this research project.

We wish to express our appreciation to The National Institute of Education and in particular to the staff of The Program on Education, Policy, and Organization and to Clifford Adelman, the Project Officer.

Finally, it was a privilege for us to interview community college faculty, staff, and students, and to learn from them.

Section One: Introduction

Chapter One

Overview of the Study: Institution at the Crossroads

What is it like to teach and work in a community college? How do community college faculty understand and make sense of their work? These are questions simply enough phrased, but the background to them, the study of them, and the resulting reflections on them are complex and deeply connected to our dilemma in merging notions of excellence with notions of equality. These questions and that dilemma are at the center of this study.

A system that employs over two hundred thousand full- and part time teachers, that enrolls over four million students in approximately nine hundred and fifty public community colleges spread across our nation (Breneman and Nelson 1981, p.1) and that spends approximately 6.3 billion dollars annually represents a significant educational institution from almost any point of view. From the perspective of researchers interested in the relationship between education and equity in this country, community colleges are institutions that simply cannot be ignored.

To gain insight into the workings of community colleges we decided to explore the work of community college faculty. While boards of trustees, administrators, secretaries, custodians, bookkeepers, telephone receptionists, cafeteria workers, security officers and others all interconnect with faculty in making community colleges work, we limited this inquiry to the work of faculty and professional staff who have instructional responsibilities. We believed that an exploration of their work would lend insight into the nature of community college education in this country and especially into the relationship between community colleges and equal educational opportunity.

Exploring the meaning faculty make of their work is inherently complex. The process requires, as a reading of Alfred Schutz (1967) would suggest, a reconstruction of the constitutive factors of a person's life leading up to becoming a community college faculty member, the articulation of the concrete details of work experience, and the time, space, and willingness to reflect on the complicated interaction of past and present experiences as mediated by each person's intentions.

To add to the complexity, community college faculty work in an institution that has **been** placed and has placed itself at the crossroads of conflict in our society. That conflict is between our liberal ideology which stresses equal opportunity, individualism, and the possibility of upward mobility (Hartz 1955) and the realities of the way social class, race, and gender interact with our economic system. Faculty who work in community colleges are buffeted by the crosscurrents of this social conflict and by their coming to grips with the reality of their own "American dream." That interaction between faculty's individual work and its social context provides a major focus of the study.

While strongly supported in many areas of the country, while bedecked with impressive new facilities in many places, and while bringing through their doors an increasing percentage of those who pursue higher education (or postsecondary education, as it has come to be called), community colleges are near the bottom of the hierarchy in our system of higher education. In addition to our interest in the social context of community colleges, we were also interested in how this place of community colleges within the structure of higher education affected the work of those within community colleges.

In the public's eye, in students' eyes, and in the eyes of faculty in higher education, community colleges have held an ambiguous position between the high schools and the four-year colleges and universities. Their history, their financing, their governance reflect that ambiguity. But if there has been an ambiguity of structural and organizational factors, there has been no ambiguity that we could discern about their status in the hierarchy of higher education. It would be euphemistic to cloud that reality. Despite a sometimes noble sense of mission, despite many instances of true local pride in a community's two-year college, despite (in states like California) salaries that compete and in some cases outrun salaries in four-year institutions, there is a nagging, pervasive sense that, for both faculty and students, being at a community college means being near the bottom of the higher education totem pole. (Howard London [1978, p.55] points out that for some vocational teachers whose reference group is the workers in the occupation for which they are preparing students, that is much less the case.)

We have been interested, therefore, in exploring through this study how the place of community college teachers in the hierarchy of higher education interacts with the way they do their work and the meaning they make of it. One of the participants whose profile we have presented in a later chapter in this report told us how he had been treated with deference as a professor when he and his family lived in a working-class neighborhood. He moved his family to a "better" neighborhood where his neighbors were corporate businessmen and professionals. At social gatherings where he met his new neighbors, he was often asked where he worked. When he told them he taught at the community college he was greeted with a polite but uninterested, "Oh," and the subject of his work would be lamely dropped.

Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1973) present a compelling picture of the hidden injuries of class in the larger society. We were interested in our study in understanding what the faculty members' own participation in the "American dream" of moving up meant to their work. The issue seems to us doubly important when their place near the bottom of the higher education hierarchy is in an institution which, at least formerly if not at present, viewed and advocated itself as an instrument of upward mobility for its students.

In addition to investigating the ideological, social, and systemic context of faculty's work, we were also interested in how the internal organization of the college and the system in which the colleges operated affected their work and the meaning they made of it. The community college borrows organizational and governing principles from both secondary schools and four-year colleges. What this has meant for community college faculty is that notions of strong faculty governance, most prevalent in what Cohen and March (1974) call the organizational anarchy of four-year colleges, conflict with notions of administrative authority commonly found in secondary schools. We were interested in exploring how this conflict affected faculty work.

Contemporary factors serve to exacerbate the conflict between faculty and administrative control. Recent tightening of economic conditions and increased competition among institutions of higher education for a shrinking body of traditional-age students have resulted in increased centralization of authority and more and more efforts toward coordination of community colleges at the state level (Breneman and Nelson 1981, p.38). Moreover, what were once expanding community college faculties have become fixed, if not reduced, in size. The sense of expanding horizons has diminished. The effect of increased centralization of authority and a limited sense of opportunity and power for individual faculty provide the third level of context within which we have explored the nature of faculty and professional staff work in community colleges.

To explore what it is like to work in community colleges and what meaning faculty make of their work, given the ideological, social, and organizational context, we conducted a series of three in-depth interviews with seventy-six faculty and staff participants and twenty-four students from community colleges in Massachusetts, New York State, and California. The methodology is described in the next chapter and our reflections on what we have learned about in-depth phenomenological interviewing is described in chapter fourteen. To present the results of our inquiry we have developed profiles, in their own words, of community college faculty, staff, and students whom we have interviewed, and commentary on those profiles.

The **heart** of our inquiry is presented through the profiles.

A reader who immerses himself or herself in the stories of the people we present will share aspects of the faculty members' lives before coming to the college, details of their experience in the college, and their reflections on the meaning of that experience that will allow the reader to start making meaningful connections within each of the profiles and among all of them. While each participant's story is different, major connecting themes emerge from the profiles.

Themes emerge which reflect the tensions inherent in the conflict between egalitarian and elitist notions of education. Often those tensions are embedded in the educational history of faculty members that can be so different from that of their students. Grading and testing become an arena where a sense of standards in college teaching conflicts with a concern for both the individual student and the retention of numbers of students in the college.

Themes emerge which highlight the inherent frustration of teachers who take individual and personal responsibility for structural, social, and economic forces far larger than their individual efforts . English teachers struggle to have students learn to write under conditions that induce a sense of personal inadequacy. Stories are told of faculty self-doubt concerning the large number of students who drop out of classes, pulled by the need to work, conflicts in personal situations, or confrontations with the demands of the subject matter. Perspectives that try to soften the enervating effects of attrition and would have community college critics realize that "...students use community colleges for their own purposes and frequently achieve those purposes short of program completion" (Cohen and Brawer 1982, p.57), do not effectively deal with a faculty member's sense of loss when a student is no longer in his or her seat in the classroom.

Themes emerge also among the profiles which reflect current community college faculty contending with the results of the community college movement's separation of research from teaching and eschewal of research (Eells 1931, p. 202-203). The resulting anti-intellectualism that stems from the disjunction of teaching and research plagues those community college faculty who, by their own experience, interests, and predisposition, cannot readily accept that disjunction.

The meaning of degrees for faculty in community colleges reflects some of the major tensions which appear in the profiles. The ambiguity of the Ph.D. in community colleges--the degree seeming to hold simultaneously the possibility of status and scorn for community college faculty--is pictured in the profiles of those who have, and those who chose not to have, a Ph.D. Stories of pressure to seek terminal degrees for a sense of security in the college coincide with stories about the awkwardness with which those who hold the doctorate are treated by those who do not.

The stories of vocational teachers in the community college connect to those of academic teachers as they both contend with the deep schism between manual and intellectual labor that has evolved in western industrialized civilization (Sohn-Rethel 1978). Stories of vocational teachers who know that the chasm between "skills" and understanding is an artificial one, who have a sense of "skill" rooted in a time when craftspeople conceptualized and carried out an entire process of production, connect with stories of academic teachers who decry the possibility of interesting their students in ideas. Both academic and career teachers we interviewed sought a more complete sense of education, one which did not pay homage to the division between career and academic education.

Themes that portray teachers, counselors, and students struggling with the confusion that is embedded in our society between notions of ability and notions of performance abound in the interview data. Adjectives like "bright" and "dumb" are used almost casually by some of our participants . Their use reflects indoctrination by a society which has reified intelligence, tested its existence, and given it a single number which is supposed to capture its essence (Gould 1981). At the same time there are poignant moments in the interviews when faculty members catch themselves using that vocabulary and then, when asked to think about their own experience, disown and reject the terms.

Faculty in community colleges express satisfaction in working in an institution which increasingly seems to offer opportunities to older women who wish to return to school, opportunities that earlier personal decisions interacting with a sexist society did not afford them. Yet women faculty in the community college face their own battles with sexism within their lives both in and out of the institution. The profiles of women community college faculty and the chapter on returning women students illuminate the complex interaction of these themes.

Profiles of minority faculty who work in community colleges present a picture of all the tensions that nonminority faculty must face. In addition, minority faculty face interacting issues of racism, social class, power, and opportunity as these factors affect their everyday lives at work and in the community.

The chapter on faculty for whom teaching in community colleges is a second career presents the difficulties of adjusting to an institution the reality of which they knew little about before they started to work in it. The experience of such participants, the disjunction between their view of themselves and what they have to learn to work with in their new positions, helps to highlight the nature of the community colleges.

The chapter on counselors presents some of the factors involved in their difficult role poised between faculty and administration . The profiles presented indicate that they sometimes become scapegoats for those who fault them for not dealing adequately with all the symptoms of societal and institutional complexity and contradiction which are built into the life and function of the community college.

This capsule description of some of the themes that appear in the profile chapters cannot do justice to the stories the faculty and students present in their own words. It is tempting to present the profiles and let them stand on their own. After hundreds of hours of interviewing and more hundreds of hours of reading the transcripts of the interviews, we came to know the work of community college faculty in a way that increased our respect for the complexity inherent in that work. Yet our experience in the interviewing leads us to make our own meaning of what we have seen, heard, and read. We present that meaning in commentary within each chapter and in the final two chapters of the report.

In our preparation for this project we discovered at least two antithetical types of writing about the community colleges in the United States . The first was that of the advocates of the community college movement. From Walter Eells(1931) to Leland Medsker (1960) and continuing with more current publications sponsored by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (Gleazer 1980), there is a literature that outlines the tremendous growth of community colleges. This literature reflects a point of view that accepts the assumptions which underlie the establishment and phenomenal growth of community colleges. From a point of view of advocacy and acceptance the authors in this tradition study various aspects of the community colleges, identify problem areas, and map out directions for the future.

There is another strand of literature which is critical of the assumptions which underlie the community college movement and questions its claim to represent a genuine societal attempt to increase equity of access to higher education and to the traditional and new occupations that require the training and credentials that such education offers. Cohen and Brawer (1982), two of the most prolific commentators on community colleges, outline that strand of writing from Burton Clark (1960) through James Karabel (1977) to Stephen Zwerling (1976). To that strand we would add Howard London (1978) and Alexander Astin (1982). A dialectic has been at work. First the advocates of community colleges had the field; then the scholarly critique began to be heard.

When we began this study we were neither radical critics, if by that a Marxist orientation is assumed, nor liberal advocates of community colleges. While critical of the competitiveness and lack of community inherent in the liberal ideology of individualism and skeptical about the Horatio Alger myths which sustain the liberal ideology in our country, we maintained a hope that our economic system and social organizations could move in the direction of more equity. We believed that educational systems, while incapable of effecting social change on their own, had a responsibility, at the minimum, not to reinforce educational and thereby social inequity and, at the maximum, to provide an energy toward educational equity in this country.

What we have learned does not lead us to a simple two-valued orientation of either critique or advocacy of community colleges. Nor do we hew a middle-of-the-road perspective which keeps us on the fence about community colleges and the issue of equity in education . Our learning connects to both strands of literature on the community college. We believe that our approach to the subject through the methodology of in-depth phenomenological interviewing makes a modest contribution toward understanding the complexities and dilemmas that neither perspective offers alone. In presenting our major findings in the medium through which we gained access to them, the words of our participants, we hope that the readers of this report will come a step closer to knowing what it is like to teach and work in a community college, what it means for faculty to work in community colleges, and how that understanding and meaning-making affect the workings of community colleges in this country.

Chapter Two

Methodology of The Study:

A Qualitative Approach Through In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing

Our goal in this study was to explore the nature and meaning of the work of community college faculty and to relate our understanding of that work to the achievement of key institutional goals. To achieve our goal we used the methodology of in-depth phenomenological interviewing suggested to us by the work of Kenneth Dolbeare and David Schuman (Schuman 1982). In this chapter we describe the rationale for [illegible] methodology and the following specific aspects of the research process: contact and access, selection of participants, the interview process, and working with the data gathered from the interviews.

Rationale

At the 1983 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association held in Montreal, more than one discussant commented on the range of methodological approaches represented in the papers. The fact that qualitative research based on qualitative assumptions was represented in the American Educational Research Association program is a significant indication of the growing critique of quantitative research in education and the increasing tolerance, if not appreciation, for methods of research based on a different set of assumptions.

Those assumptions informed the approach to the research presented in this report. We began from the position that to understand the work of community college faculty and the meaning that they make of their work, experimentation was out of the question. Surveys and questionnaires, while suitable for large numbers, lacked depth and presupposed a list of questions to which we were seeking answers or hypotheses that we wanted to test. We assumed that any process of knowing and understanding demanded a relationship between those who wanted to know and what they wanted to know about. We rejected methods of inquiry that stressed the separation of the researcher from the subject because we believe that such separation is neither possible nor desirable when the subjects are human. We rejected an approach that depends on quantifiable data because experience with quantification has taught that, in order to meet the criteria for reliable statistical inference, large numbers of participants are required. In addition, the separating out of factors of experience to a level suitable for quantification could tend to trivialize the complexity we were trying to understand. (For a succint critique of quantitative research as applied to human beings, see John M. Johnson 1975.)

We also considered the advantages and disadvantages of a study based on participant observation such as conducted by Howard London (1978). However, theoretical and practical issues in participant observation convinced us that for our purposes in-depth interviewing provided the most grounded approach to the type of understanding we sought (see Martin Trow in McCall 1969).

There is a range of approaches to in-depth interviewing. Influenced by the work of Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman 1982) we centered on an approach which would stress the meaning community college faculty made of their work. We believed that the meaning they made of their work would greatly influence how they carried out that work and, by implication, how community colleges achieved their institutional goals. The series of interviews we developed, therefore, asked our participants to reconstruct constitutive factors of their experience before coming to the community college and of their work in the community college. The interview process encouraged the participants to relate those individual experiences to larger organizational and social issues that formed the context in which they worked. That the meaning an individual makes of his or her experience is accessible when the individual reflects on the constitutive factors of that experience, is convincingly argued by Alfred Schutz (1967). His book, The Phenomenology of the Social World, provided the theoretical underpinning for our approach to in-depth interviewing.

Selection of Participants

In selecting participants for the study we made an early decision to study the work of community college faculty and professional staff who had instructional responsibilities in a wide range of settings. We were not interested in any single community college site. We selected participants who worked in community colleges in large urban centers, in small towns, and in suburban settings.

The study was carried out in two phases. Our original study, sponsored by the Exxon Education Foundation, concentrated on participants who taught in community colleges in Massachusetts in 1979. Massachusetts ranked forty-eighth in the nation in per capita expenditures for public higher education (Chambers, 1979). Most of the funding for the state-wide community college system comes from state sources (Garms 1977). As we expanded and deepened our research through our NIE-sponsored study, one of our goals was to understand whether the stories and experiences we had collected in our Massachusetts interviews were particular to

Massachusetts because of the low level of funding and the centralized state organization of community colleges. We therefore decided to do our additional interviews in the NIE cycle of the study in states that have contrasting characteristics.

We chose California because it has a longer history with community colleges than Massachusetts, was third in the nation in per capita expenditure for higher education (Chambers 1979) and, at least before Proposition 13, had a system of governance and funding more balanced among state and local sources than Massachusetts (Garms 1977). New York State also provided a useful contrast to Massachusetts and California in addition to being accessible to us on a regular basis during the academic year. New York ranked twenty-fifth in per capita appropriations for public higher education (Chambers 1979) and provided an even more balanced formula for funding among state, local, and tuition sources than either California or Massachusetts (Garms 1977). In addition, both California and New York provided us access to community colleges that were much larger than those in Massachusetts. The contrasting levels of appropriations for public higher education, the different formulae for funding and governance represented in each state, and the wider range of size of institutions determined our choice of participants in California and New York State. We also included additional participants from Massachusetts in this second, NIE-sponsored, phase of our study.

In addition to interviewing community college faculty and professional staff who had instructional responsibilities, we decided to interview a small sample of students in community colleges. In their interviews faculty often made reference to the nature of community college students and to student experience in the colleges. We decided that, although our focus was on the work of community college faculty, interviewing students would provide us a mirror with which to view the experience of community college faculty. We therefore interviewed a sample of twenty-four students distributed evenly in Massachusetts, New York State, and California.

While not claiming statistical representativeness for our sample (see the discussion of representativeness in chapter fourteen) our goal in selecting individual participants was to build a pool that was fair to the larger community college faculty population. Recent reports indicate that the percentage of women faculty in community colleges is growing. As of 1980 it stood at approximately forty percent (Wolk 1980, p.192; Gilbert 1980, p.3). In our final sample of seventy-six faculty, thirty-two were women representing forty-two percent, a figure consistent with the national population.

The statistical picture of minority and nonminority faculty in community colleges is infused with many problems as described by Michael Olivas (1979). Olivas reports that in the early seventies nonminorities accounted for ninety-five percent of the faculty in community colleges and minorities for five percent. Nothing in what Olivas or other sources have presented would indicate that that figure is rising at any significant rate and there is even some suggestion of decline. If we had adhered to the five percent figure in our study, we would have interviewed a total of only four minority faculty. However, because we believed that issues of equitable educational opportunity are central to the notion of community colleges and that the experience of minority community college faculty would contribute to our understanding of the issues, we decided to include more minority faculty in the study than would be called for using numerical representation as the only criterion. Therefore, of our seventy-six faculty and staff participants, twenty-one were members of minority groups in the United States.

Another major consideration in our selection of participants was the division in community colleges between faculty who would be considered "liberal arts" and those who would be classified as "career education" faculty. In The Culture of the Community College, Howard London (1978) built a strong case that faculty teaching in liberal arts transfer programs have a different sense of their work than do faculty who teach in vocational programs. The literature is replete with statements about the increasing importance of vocational programs in community colleges. Indeed in California it is reported that more than three quarters of the students in community colleges are enrolled in courses to learn specific vocational skills and have no intention of completing a program or transferring to a four-year college (Watkins 1983). Yet there is very little statistical data on the relative number of career and liberal arts faculty. Partially that is a problem of definition; our experience has shown an increasing number of faculty who would normally be considered "academic" teaching in "vocational" programs and thus blurring the distinctions, at least on one level. (See Cohen and Brawer 1982, for a more extensive discussion of the blurring of such distinctions.) Grant and Eiden (1980, p. 104) gave us some guidance in the matter by reporting on areas in which community college faculty earned their highest degree as of 1972-73. At that time approximately twenty to thirty-three percent of community college faculty held their highest degrees in vocational areas. Of our seventy-six faculty and staff participants, nineteen, or twenty-five percent, were faculty in vocational areas, a figure we believe is fair to the historical picture but perhaps a little low given the recent movement toward vocational education in community colleges.

In addition to considerations of gender, nonminority and minority status, and career education and liberal arts program affiliation, in selecting participants we also took into consideration issues of age and experience, highest degree held, and whether the faculty were tenured or nontenured. Wolk (1980, p.192) indicated that 15.3 percent of community college faculty held the doctorate, including both the Ph.D. and the Ed.D. In our sample of seventy-six faculty and staff participants, twelve or 15.78 percent held the doctorate. Wolk (1980, p. 192) also reported that the average age of community college faculty members was forty-four and that the average community college faculty member had ten years of teaching experience. Among our faculty and staff participants, the range of age and experience was consistent with these figures.

In selecting our participants, other less concrete factors also affected our selection process. For example, during an early round of contact visits we met with a group of faculty who had just endured a divisive conflict between faculty and administration resulting in the forced resignation of the president. It became clear to us as we talked with this group of faculty that their perceptions of their work experience would be deeply affected by this recent clash. Although we considered for a short time including some faculty from this school in our sample because such political battles are not irrelevant to the work of community college faculty, we decided that, as much as we could discern ahead of time, we wanted to avoid participants who had an axe to grind. Nor did we want our research to become associated with local political battles.

Similarly we avoided selecting participants who had been recommended to us as "stars" of the faculty, although certainly some who were chosen for other reasons turned out to be "stars" on their faculty. We were interested in the everyday experience of faculty who carry out the work of community colleges and not in celebrities on the faculty whose experience might be more affected by their status than by the nature of their work in the community college.

We also included in our group of participants seventeen people who had professional staff positions in community colleges, particularly staff positions which included instructional responsibilities. Among those staff were counselors and staff of instructional resource centers. We interviewed only two people who had administrative positions with no instructional responsibility. (For distribution of faculty, staff, and student participants, see Tables 1 and 2, Appendix I.)

Contact and Access

As we indicate in chapter fourteen of this report, we learned early in our research process that how access was established with participants and how contact was made with them affected the actual interview process. In achieving access to potential participants and making contact with them we established a process that was directed toward achieving as much equity in the interviewing relationship as possible. Therefore we made contact with participants through peers and avoided making contact through people in positions of authority over the participants. We not only wanted to avoid the impression that our research was supported and sanctioned by the administration of a college, and that it was a study of any one particular site; we also wanted to minimize differences in perceptions of power and authority between us as researchers and the community college faculty we would interview.

We made a contact visit with almost every participant before the actual interview process began. Having acquired the names of potential participants from a network of various contacts , we would make a contact visit to the college to meet with potential participants. These contact meetings would either be held individually or in small groups. In these meetings we explained who we were, what our study was about, how we intended to use the data we collected, and the amount of time and the nature of the commitment we were seeking from participants. In addition to talking about ourselves and our work, we would ask the participants to tell us about themselves so that we could collect information about them relevant to the goals and criteria we had established for selection of participants.

During an individual contact visit, if a potential participant met the criteria which we were using, we would ask that person to become a participant in the study. If our contact visit was with a small group of potential participants, after the meeting we would review the information we had collected, select the people we wanted to invite to join the study, and call them to ask if they would be willing to become participants. In the entire process our goal was to be explicit about our work and to try to create a situation in which the potential participant made an active choice about whether to participate in the study. Once that choice was made, we proposed a series of dates and times for the interview series; we tried to turn the willingness of a faculty member to participate in what was a rather abstract notion into a commitment to concrete dates, times, and places of meetings.

After having made contact with a participant, secured the participant's agreement to participate, and set up the time and place for the series of interviews, one final step remained as a bridge between the contact process and the interview process. At the appointment for the first interview, but before it actually started, we would ask our participants to read carefully a detailed "Written Consent Form" that we had prepared for the project. While the original impetus for the form came from federal regulations concerning the rights of human subjects in research, the form served more than just a legal function. By making the form as explicit as possible about who we were, the nature of the work, the commitment asked of the participants, the uses to which the data would be put, and the rights of the participants, we clarified in our own minds the purpose and nature of our work. In addition, by giving ample time for the participants to read the form carefully and ask any questions that they might have about the process, we not only established a sense of informed consent but also a sense of commitment to the work we were about to begin. The written consent form, in outlining the nature of the project, established a framework in which both participants and interviewers could pursue the interview process guided by the sense of serious purpose and commitment represented by the mutual signing of the consent form. (See Appendix II for copy of the written consent form.)

The Interview Process

Our research design was structured around a sequence of three in-depth interviews with each participant in the study. Each interview in the series lasted one and one-half hours, and the interviews were normally spaced about three days to a week apart. The first two interviews were usually held in the faculty member's office or another room in his or her college where uninterrupted privacy could be assured. Whenever logistically possible and whenever the participant was willing, we held the third interview in the participant's home. Each interview was audiotaped. We used a high-quality audio-cassette recorder and two microphones or other smaller tape recorders. For reasons on which we comment in chapter fourteen we did not sacrifice sound quality for the sake of unobtrusiveness in recording the interviews.

Each of the three interviews had a distinctive purpose and focus. The first interview concentrated on the life of the participants before their work in community colleges. We asked our participants to reconstruct experiences with parents, siblings, neighborhood friends and acquaintances, schooling, and early work experiences. The second interview focused on what it was like to work in the community college. In this interview we asked participants to reconstruct in as concrete detail as possible how they spent their time and energy in the community college. We concentrated on the details of their experience rather than on their opinions and attitudes which would have been abstractions of that experience. The third interview focused on the meaning that the participants made of their work in the community college. Given what they had reconstructed in the first two interviews, we asked them to reflect on how they understood the place of their work in their lives.

Each of the three interviews in the sequence had a specific purpose and focus but within each interview our interviewing technique was open-ended. We did not have a set of pre-established questions to which we were seeking answers or a set of hypotheses which we wanted to test. At times, we would ask questions that had developed from previous interviews with the same participant or with other participants which seemed to reflect common themes. Some examples of questions that we would repeat in different interviews are: "What is it like to be a woman on this faculty?" "What is it like for you to have a Ph.D. in this community college?" On the whole we severely limited such thematic questions lest our asking them create themes in the minds of participants which would have not been there had we not asked the question. When we did ask thematic questions, we did so after the participants had spent the time they wanted to spend recreating the details of their experience and when such questions seemed connected to the experience that they had presented.

Our methodological goal in the interviewing was to have our participants reconstruct and reflect on the concrete details , the constitutive factors, of their experience. Our primary task was to frame the interview and be active listeners. We most often asked questions when we did not understand something that had been said, when we wanted to hear more detail about what a participant was discussing, or when we wanted to guide the interview within the framework established for that particular interview.

In chapter fourteen we comment more extensively on specific aspects of the methodology and interrelated epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues involved in in-depth interviewing.

Working with Our Material

We began our interviewing under the Exxon Education Foundation grant in December of 1979. We interviewed participants in Massachusetts through August of 1980. During the last stages of our work on the Exxon grant, we sought to expand and deepen our research by applying for a grant from NIE to allow us to interview community college faculty in California, New York State, and additional participants in Massachusetts. We received that grant and began our interviewing in California in the summer of 1981. During the 1981-82 academic year we conducted interviews with faculty and students in community colleges in New York State , students in California and additional faculty participants in Massachusetts. While we conducted one interview in November of 1982 and two in January of 1983, the great majority of our interviewing was completed by the summer of 1982.

We spent the summer and fall of 1982 reading the verbatim transcripts which had been typed from the audiotapes of each interview. Over three hundred interviews provided approximately twelve thousand double-spaced pages of transcripts to be read and studied. We spent seven months reading the transcripts of the interviews. At least three readers carefully studied each transcript. Each reader marked passages in the margin that were of interest . We subsequently labeled those passages according to specific social, historical, and organizational categories which we developed as we read.

In order to be as responsible as possible to our participants and our data, we decided early in the project to present the main body of our findings about the work of community college faculty in their own words. Initially, we thought that there would be two major ways of presenting the material in the interviews. The first would be to develop "profiles" of selected participants. We conceived of a profile as a self-contained, in-their-own-words narrative of how the participants came to their work in their community colleges, what their work was like, and what meaning they made of their work. A second way we had thought we would present the material was to take excerpts from participants for whom we did not develop profiles and group them around certain major themes that arose from the material, developing chapters around those excerpts. In writing a paper we delivered at the 1983 Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Seidman, Sullivan, and Schatzkamer 1983) we realized that the excerpts would be better utilized as commentary on the profiles as opposed to providing material for separate chapters. We therefore decided to present the findings of the research primarily through profiles of selected participants.

During the seven months we spent studying the interview material, we discussed each participant's interview to assess whether the material was suitable for a profile . We used the following criteria to guide our discussions: (1) comprehensiveness of material we had marked in each of the three interviews; (2) level of concrete reconstruction of the participant's experience; (3) issues of potential vulnerability to the participant; (4) the sense of fairness to the total interview that such a profile would convey. Of our seventy-six faculty and staff participants we selected thirty-four whose interview data we would develop into profiles to be included in this final report. While the criteria for selection of participants for profiles from our total sample did not include consistency with the national picture, we note that the final selection approaches such consistency. Only the small number of staff profiles represents a significant difference. Of the twenty-four student participants, we originally selected eight. For the purposes of this report we have chosen to develop profiles of five returning women students from this group. (For distribution of faculty, staff, and students selected for profiles, see Tables 3 and 4 , Appendix III.)

The Method of Composing the Profiles

Having marked each interview for material we thought of interest, we developed the first edited version of a participant's transcript. This "first edit" would usually result in the material being reduced by a third to a half. Each member of the research team would then read the first edited version of the transcript and underline passages in the material which each felt could not be left out of a final version of the profile. Those underlined, first edited versions were then collated and a single, underlined, edited version was developed. The process of underlining material that each member felt was indispensable to the final profile resulted in reducing the material to approximately forty percent of the original interview.

We then gave the underlined version of the transcript to the project secretary who entered that version into the university word processing system. We then received what we came to call the "first generation" computer print-out, which was then edited by at least two members of the research team. The job of the editing was to weave together narratives of how the participants came to the community college, what their work was like, and what that work meant to them. The following criteria guided the development of the profile: (1) comprehensiveness of the story;(2) clarity of the story;(3) fairness to the participant; (4) relationship of the individual experience to major social and organizational issues involved in community college education;(5) fairness to the total sequence of interviews and the interviewing process.

In addition to editing the first-generation profile according to these criteria, steps were taken to disguise the identity of participants. Although we could not guarantee anonymity to the participants because anyone knowing a participant well and reading his or her in-depth profile would most likely be able to recognize the participant , we did agree to take steps that would disguise identity to the great majority of potential readers. Therefore, we changed or eliminated the names of persons, places, and institutions. We gave participants pseudonyms and took additional steps to cloud the identity of the participant when necessary.

The profiles themselves are composed almost totally of the words of the participant. In a few cases, in order to make transitions between passages or to make a meaning clearer, we have interjected our words. Where we have done so we have placed our words in brackets. The profile represents between twenty and thirty percent of the participant's original interview material. In most cases the order of the profile material is consistent with the order presented in the original interviews. In some cases material from a later interview has been placed in the profile in an earlier position. We made such transpositions only when necessary for clarification and amplification of the subject being discussed. Clearly much material is omitted; sentences have been conjoined that were not contiguous in the original transcripts. In reviewing the material and in deciding what could be left out and what could be brought together, we followed the following guidelines:(1) repetitious material could be omitted; (2) _ad hominem_ material could be omitted; (3) material unconnected to either other passages in the interview itself or to larger themes of the social and organizational context would be omitted; (4) material that would make the participant vulnerable if identity were disclosed would be omitted; (5)material which, if taken out of the total context of the interview, was not fair to the participant would be omitted; (6) material that, although compelling, was not related to the subject of the study could be omitted.

Guidelines for bringing together material that was not contiguous in the original interview were the following:(1) the joined material made sense in a way that was identical with the original meaning of the material in its original place in the transcript; (2) the converse of course also guided us: that is, no material was joined that changed the meaning of any aspect of the material either in its original location in the transcripts or as newly composed in the profiles.

In addition to a profile-composing process there was a process of editing profiles. In most cases we deleted repetitions common to oral speech but which appear awkward in written form. We also edited out syntactical inconsistencies that occur when people extemporize. We have also edited out our questions. The final test of profile composing was whether the result is fair to the total interview process and to the participants themselves.

What follows is a sequence of chapters on the work of community college faculty and a chapter on returning women students. The focus of each chapter is the profiles of participants supplemented by our commentary on the meaning we make of those profiles. In chapter fourteen we synthesize our comments on what we have learned about the methodology of in-depth interviewing. That chapter is meant as a complement to this chapter on methodology, and, taken together, they give a full sense of both the methodology used in this study and our understanding of the interrelated ethical, epistemological, and social issues that flow from the methodology of in-depth phenomenological interviewing.

Section Two:

The Work of Liberal Arts Faculty

Section Two: The Work of Liberal Arts Faculty

Preface

In 1922 at its second annual meeting The American Association of Junior Colleges defined the junior college as "...an institution offering two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade" (Eells 1931, p.3). Sixty years later in their comprehensive study, The American Community College, Arthur Cohen and Florence Brawer open their discussion of community colleges by describing them as institutions that offer associate degrees and occupational certificates to their students and a variety of other services to the communities in which they are located (Cohen and Brawer 1982, p.xv). It is clear from the change in terms of description, and from reading the history of community colleges, that their sense of boundaries has expanded. Although the notion of vocational terminal education was present at the inception of junior colleges, there has recently been a heavy emphasis on career education with an implication of "terminal" studies for the students in those programs. There has also been a reaching out to the communities in which the colleges are located to somehow serve any and all life-long learning and cultural needs that can be identified.

In Section Two of this report we concentrate on the original collegiate function of community colleges by presenting profiles of faculty whose work it is to teach the liberal arts subjects. Section Three concerns the faculty who teach in career programs . In Section Four we step out of the strict collegiate and career dichotomy to look at issues of faculty work which cut across those lines. We examine the work of counselors, the work of minority faculty in predominantly white institutions, and the work of participants for whom teaching in the community college represents a second career. Finally, as a mirror of the faculty profiles, we present profiles and commentary on returning women students, a group constantly referred to by the faculty we interviewed.

We begin Section Two with a chapter on the work of teachers of English in community colleges. We then move, in Chapter Four, to teachers of humanities, in Chapter Five to teachers of math and science, and in Chapter Six to teachers of the social sciences.

Chapter Three

Language at the Core: The Work of Teachers of English

Introduction to the Profiles

We start our section on the liberal arts in community colleges with the presentation of the profiles of four teachers of English. Each profile presents a different perspective on the work of English teachers in community colleges. One of the profiles is that of a teacher in Massachusetts. Two are of English teachers in California community colleges. The fourth is a profile of a participant in California who worked as a part-time English teacher for five years and then left community college teaching.

Of all teachers in community colleges, teachers of English hold the central position. Their subject is the teaching of language: reading it, writing it, comprehending it, appreciating it, speaking it, connecting to it through its use in literature, newspapers, and magazines; transmitting the traditional and mass culture. No aspect of our individual and social being is more at the core of our experience than our experience with and relationship to language. Our culture and all its psychological, social, and organizational resources and tensions, contradictions, and conflicts are infused in our experience with language and can be examined through our relationship to it. The profiles of the following teachers of English as teachers of language in community colleges provide a window through which to view the hope, complexity, and contradictions of social and individual experience which are played out within the walls of community colleges.

Profile

NANCY WARREN

(Nancy Warren, in her early forties, teaches English in a northeastern community college. She was interviewed in her home in the winter of 1980.)

How I got into it? I stumbled into it. I started on my doctorate and did a year of that and decided I was absolutely fed up with it and couldn't stand it any longer. I dropped out and got into a program through the Ed School designed to prepare older teachers for teaching in the high school and community college system. Through that program I got a full-time teaching job in a high school, taught for a year and went to classes on Saturday. At that point I decided to get out and come East to finish my doctorate .

The local community college was at that time wanting to revive a remedial program and looking for someone who was interested in teaching it. Since jobs were easily come by at that time and I knew a couple of people here, I drove down and said, "I would like to do this," and they said, "All right, fine, come on down and do it. And you can have a lit course if you want." I meant to stay for only a year to sort of recoup my finances and try out my ideas and then come back and do a literary dissertation at the university, but I really liked it so I stayed. And have been here ever since.

I missed a lot of school when I was a little kid. I guess it was always easy and I did well so I didn't, I suppose, think too much about it. I have scattered memories. I remember in fifth grade not being able to do word problems in math and finding that distressing temporarily. I remember a sixth grade teacher who made us take dictation and do a workbook. We had to listen to him give us the answers and write very fast. I remember getting a headache from that.

In junior high kids came in from different districts, and we were mixing with more kinds of kids. It was difficult for me and sort of disoriented me. The new kids seemed sexually developed and I was very slow and so this was disconcerting to find the whole social scene dominated by an element of experiences that didn't make any sense to me.

The town was a very funny town because practically everybody there worked for "the company." Everybody's daddy was a business man in some way with the company. I had lived beyond the suburbs in the country but people in my school were from the suburbs-- comfortable, average, very middle-class families-- and suddenly when I went from junior high to high school I met kids whose dads worked in the factory at the company and also a group of kids whose families were on the faculty at the local college. That just seemed more interesting, more fun, more variety.

Then it was suddenly all snatched away by a move to Ohio. I was very unhappy in high school there, going from a large city, a very heterogeneous high school, to a very small upper-middle-class school where everybody was a blue-eyed blond German and very good academically. It was the first time I encountered racial prejudice, for example, and name calling in terms of anybody who wasn't what everybody else was. I remember taking a day or two off from school at one point in my senior year and reading Wilson's The Outsider and that seemed to be at that point terrifically significant.

When I went to college I was going to major in psych or English and the psych department was so horrendously bad that I went into English. At that time I had read very little and I really hated poetry. I remember getting through high school by memorizing the head notes to all the poetry selections and not ever reading the poems. I took a very traditional English major. I wanted badly to get to a big mixed school where I would be anonymous and the university seemed ideal for that. I got to know a whole different group of people who were very exciting--mostly Jewish kids from New York--and then we had to spend hours and hours discussing the difference of being a Jew from New York and a Wasp from upstate or out of state.

My mother had been an English major in college so there was perhaps a little encouragement there. I suppose I've always been more interested in people and the diversity of people's experiences than in anything else, and again through literature, besides meeting people and talking to people. My reading was completely haphazard and when I got to college I hadn't read any of the things that anybody else had read who had gone to a good pushy New York high school; feeling not quite like other people in some ways or feeling that sense of being an outsider. I just had a very basic thing of liking to sit down and listen to people talk, to find out where they've been and the way they see things. I used to say when I was a kid, if I could have one wish in the whole world it would be to be in somebody's head for a day or five or six people's heads for five or six different days, just see through their minds, but of course to be able to register it with my own mind as well. I enjoy things that I discover other people don't, that are very hard to teach. Mrs. Dalloway is my favorite novel and it was only when I found out how inaccessible it is to the average community college sophomore that I finally realized that other people aren't intrigued in that same way. Everybody doesn't think that it is a fascinating thing to be inside somebody else's head.

College was good academically. I was intensely happy. It is a beautiful place and I lived in a dormitory where we had a maid who came in once a week and cleaned up stuff and you ate in a dining room or cafeteria where your food was served to you and all I had to do was walk around this beautiful campus and attend courses and listen to people who were exciting to listen to. The faculty was tremendously interesting. Go back and sit at meals and sit after meals and talk to people about lectures in the courses and our own experience. It was kind of idyllic because all I wanted to do was study and talk and that is all I did. I felt as long as I did well enough to stay there that was as well as I had to do--I had no compulsion to make Phi Beta Kappa . It was in a sense pre-liberation. It was a real advantage because it was just assumed at the end somehow you would get married and have a family and that was that, so you didn't have to worry about the future. You could just be completely absorbed in the process.

I had no thought of going on to graduate school. I had never known anybody who had done that and any reason why anybody would do it. At some point in my junior year, my father observed that I ought to be able to support myself when I got out and they thought I should be taking courses in the Ed school to be able to do that. I set up a great howl and said I didn't want to do that because I knew what courses I wanted to take and they weren't Ed courses. I got my mother's backing on it and I managed to continue with a bachelor's degree. What I had decided I guess was that I would try to go somewhere and get an M.A.T., which was a new degree at that time, and got my father to agree that he would fund that if at the end of it I would have a job. Then the opportunity for a Wilson Fellowship came along and everybody else was applying for this and professors wanted me to apply so I applied and got it and that made it possible to go to grad school . Everybody else was going to grad school then too. I graduated in 1961 and finished my master's in 1963.

I inquired about what you had to do in order to teach high school. I knew someone who was preparing to teach in a junior college system but my impression of that at the time was that it is what English grad students did or if you got your master's degree and didn't get permission to go on. You could sort of fall out into the community college system and somehow it seemed more dignified, more respectable, to teach high school than to teach in the community college. I wanted to get into the program at the Ed school. I was put on a waiting list and was kind of admitted at the last minute to the program for the following fall. The program began in the summer I practice-taught. I taught junior high seventh and eighth graders, Black kids and Spanish kids. The teacher who was supposed to be in charge didn't give a damn about it and sat in the back of the room doing her finger nails and neglected to provide any materials or texts or anything. I spent the summer typing Hamlet--sounds absolutely mad but I decided to teach them all Hamlet so I spent every afternoon typing the script so the kids could have a script that matched the records and trying to do it in bits in the class and it was absolutely insane. But I had the idea if you exposed kids to the story early enough--it was just an exciting story, the ghost and murders and all that stuff--they would somehow be receptive to it later on. It was sort of screwy.

The high school thing started out well and then deteriorated. I don't remember the discipline problems being so awful at the beginning but they seemed to grow. I had two very good classes that were a delight and maybe two of the most enjoyable classes that I have ever taught, and that was the bright senior class and a bright junior class and then I had two or three average or medium. I don't know if they were juniors or seniors. That fell apart and the classes all got in different places so I ended up with four or five preparations and it was really unmanageable. And there were some troubles in the school. I was being friendly with the wrong people who were at odds with the administration and I befriended a boy whom I thought was very very bright and he was much more psychologically disturbed than I realized. At one point I was very frustrated. A girl was reading a magazine in class and in a desire to be dramatic I went and took the magazine and tore it in half and that got duly reported to one of the guidance women who hauled me in and lectured me on the bad example of English teachers destroying reading materials in front of the students. It turned out to be a library magazine and the girl's mother called up and said that her daughter was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

The whole time I was overwhelmed with the amount of work, sort of strung out and exhausted. I did absolutely nothing except try to keep up with the job. I stopped seeing all of my friends, could barely keep up with the reading, still had the notion of grading papers in the way that one had done as a teaching assistant, trying to do that on that level which is impossible with all of these kids. Then trying to spend every Saturday at the damned Ed school courses. I felt very very uncomfortable in that program. I was sort of intimidated by some of the other students who had had a lot of interesting outside experience and seemed very impressive and I guess I kind of felt, well, if they can teach I surely can't. They've got so many more people who could stand up and talk about the terrific things they had been doing all the time with the students and boy I was doing nothing but making a mess. I had a real sense of failure with the high school teaching. I've never been in a situation academically where I was at the top so I never expected to be and never found it hard to not be, whereas the teaching thing was very different; that seemed like a failure.

This was just before everything was going on. The free speech movement began the year I was teaching high school. Of course I had a lot of friends who were involved or deciding whether or not to be involved. I think I was mostly worried about my language requirements and getting my laundry done. It was all too hard. It was taking too much out of me for what I was going to get from it. I mean, it was like everybody had said, do it, you have our permission, our blessing if you want to, but I felt I wasn't really up to it, partly because of the language and partly because I just had to work awfully hard at it and I decided I wasn't really bright enough, really quick enough to do it without exhausting myself completely. I am capable of working very hard and in a very sustained way but I have always known people who are a lot brighter and a lot quicker than I who could get equal or better results in half the time. Another thing, something I disliked about the university initially was it seemed impossible to know anybody who wasn't also an English major. I guess I got around that by moving into the International House after awhile.

I looked up somewhere what doctoral programs were in the East, in New England where I knew I would like to live, doctoral programs and also teaching assistants because I had also to support myself. I got a teaching assistantship at an eastern university. This was '65 or '66, something like that. It was very small and very quiet and very kind of rural and provincial and I felt like a confident big fish at that point. I suddenly felt that I was very much on top of it and I was well suited to the demands of the program. One quickly got to know everybody and I was very pleased to hear that the teaching assistantship meant full control over the classes, and I liked that, and felt I knew exactly what I was doing in the classes. We didn't choose our books or make up our syllabus or anything but I liked it and there was also a group of very congenial enjoyable people. I think it was the first time I welcomed being in a small sort of closely knit place after having wanted always to be a very small fish in a very big puddle . After the blow of the high school teaching I welcomed a shift in that. I didn't feel a lot of pressure or constantly bombarded with new experiences, people, and things. It was restful by comparison.

In the fall I directed a remedial program at the university. That got me interested in the remedial work. I wasn't taking courses, I was studying for my comps. During that year I started at this community college in the summer. I had been a full-time teacher for a year, and in any situation in which one didn't have to worry about discipline problems I felt confident. I was modest in my ambitions at that point too. I suppose I got through my comps and a lot of people didn't so if you have a sense of all your friends who don't make it and they go teach in community college, well, okay, I can do better than that. The community college was at that time, or at least I perceived it as, an extension of the high school system, because there was one for every high school district. I perceived the community college as the first two years of a university or a state college system. To get a job in the community college you simply had to have a master's degree whereas there you had to have certification of some kind and there were exams that you had to pass on the state constitution.

We have an arrangement here whereby one can choose what one would like--an early morning, or a kind of mid-day or late-day schedule--since each of us teaches every day and usually has more than one class a day. I ordinarily have a mid-day or late-day schedule. Which means I leave here at nine or ten, get to the college for a 10:10 or a 11:15 class, usually. I have a class, perhaps followed by an office hour, another class, another office hour, or hustle around between classes, before classes, running off dittos that I want to use or getting something brought up from the audio-visual department. Last minute recording of grades in between classes if I have a free hour, or that is to say an office hour. Only ten minutes gobbling down some lunch as I am always stuck for eating time during this mid-day schedule. The pace usually seems not exactly hectic but quick and pressured, getting from class to class, and often several people wanting to see you before or after class. I do most of my work at night at home, paper grading and preparing courses. Rush into the mail room and go through the mailbox, chat with people who are grabbing coffee quickly between classes. There is not very much socializing because people all seem to be terribly busy. It is always pretty tense. If I have a lit class I usually will be running over mentally the outline I have in my notes. Sometimes I am preparing a dialogue I intend to have with a student. Planning ahead.

I still occasionally get stage fright--once in a while, not very often. Just very eager to get something across and sure that I can and being excited about it and also anxious I suppose or intimidated by a class that I don't know yet. Eager to live up to the expectations of some very good students that I don't want to disappoint or anxious about finding a way of getting to some not so good students that I would like to interest in the material. Often there is a very big gap between the excitement I feel when I am home preparing and thinking and organizing and what actually happens in class that sometimes is a real let-down because I can't get through to the students. Sometimes it works the other way--I am moderately excited or interested in something and a class picks up on it and it goes much better than I expect. The biggest problem is the sense of not enough time and so there are bad days toward the middle or the end of the semester when it just seems like a matter of getting through. Can I keep on schedule? Can I get through everything I've got to get done today at the college?

The paper grading problem is my biggest problem with the job. I mean a soul-deadening, truly soul-deadening load of grading papers. I have not yet found a way to cope with it to make it go faster or experiment with lots of things to make it less dreary. It is not that the papers are necessarily bad, just the quantity. It is not that I intrinsically hate grading papers but just so many of them, and they are always there, and I am always putting them off. So I am always thinking of them and worrying about it. No matter how good a day is or how bad, if one has got to come home to that it is on your mind all day. I've got to go home and I've got to settle down and I've got to sit and grade papers for four hours. And I always feel that when I do that, that I somehow have to turn myself off and become a kind of machine and just do it. Why do I hate doing it? Because it takes so long and because I remember years ago, when I was a TA at the university, some guy on the faculty very self-righteously said, "If you don't love grading papers as part of your job, you ought not to be an English teacher." One can be very interested in the student; it is just after you do fifty or a hundred of them, after I do ten, I am tired of doing it. No matter how good the papers are, how inspired, if I spend a whole evening I am mentally zapped.

I have never been able to get over a certain amount of anxiety while doing it. I could easily sit down for two hours and grade a multiple-choice test that required no thinking or no attention. I don't know whether it is the feeling of having to grade it in a way to justify your grade, or whether it is having to be careful to say things that encourage rather than discourage students, or uncertainty as to whether with a particular student you should not pay attention to spelling. It requires all your attention but doesn't give you any creative stimulation back beyond the pleasure of seeing that a student has understood an assignment, has learned from it and has written something good. I spend a great deal of time dreading doing it, too, which of course just makes it seem like a bigger job than it is.

I've done various things in terms of simply reading, or putting on a grade, or omitting marginal comments and only making an end comment, or making marginal comments and no end comment, or using journals and making only the briefest notes on the contents. I've tried all different kinds of things but at least in writing courses I think if a student is going to write he deserves to be read. I think some response is necessary; it is an essential part of the job since three-fourths of the job is composition teaching. Sometimes I resolve not to correct papers in any detail and I still find myself--here this kid has done something really good and I want to say that it is good, or there is one flaw in an otherwise good paper and I want to point that out. I would find it hard to do, to make a sudden shift. There is also the problem of the students who from time to time, certainly not very often, but sometimes the student who comes in to you and says, "Oh my God, I was writing papers in high school and nobody ever told me what was wrong, and I have now read this and I see what I am doing and now I can correct it." And of course when that happens you are so elated that you feel you have got to give every kid a chance to have that experience. I certainly really go into despair thinking I could have in fact at this point exactly twenty-five years of grading papers. One thinks of waitressing or--I don't know.

The root of our problem--at least as we perceive it at this community college--is the number of students in the freshman class. Now there are not enough sophomore classes to go around and that means every semester part of the department has four freshmen classes in which the enrollment may go up as high as thirty-three--it is supposed to be twenty-seven but it is always above that--at least at the beginning of the semester. It drops back quite a bit and we argue it wouldn't drop back so much if it didn't start out so high. But if you start out with one hundred and twenty students there is no way that you can read the papers even if you put nothing on them, even if you didn't put a grade but simply read the one hundred and twenty papers. We had a rule of three thousand words a semester which would be six five-hundred-word papers or five essay exams.

In our department there are fifteen or sixteen for the most part fanatically dedicated, very experienced, competent people who are slowly being ground down by a system and arrangement that they feel is impossible. Indeed if I were really being dramatic about it, I would point out that our former chairman, who also taught English, committed suicide and we lost one member to alcoholism and other people have had problems. I guess I keep telling myself that any job has a certain amount of drudgery and it's the only part of the job I dislike. I'm not enthralled with committee meetings. The good part compensates and I remind myself that I have a summer vacation in which I do not grade papers and get rested up and I always start out each semester with enthusiasm and energy and then there is this kind of running down as always as all these papers accumulate and you have done more and more of them. The twenty-five year prospect is very disturbing.

I suppose I am maybe just a congenital optimist but I always think some new system is going to work better. It is a totally absurd situation and not only do many of the students need extra help but you also have in every class a very broad spectrum of abilities. You have some students who can be told to do something and conceptually grasp it and do it where others telling them isn't going to be of any use whatsoever, they can't grasp it and apply it.

We've done everything we've been able to think of and we've had endless meetings and discussions about it. I think that it is perceived as the greatest problem in our situation by all of us and we've sent memos to the president and we've had meetings with the president and talked to the dean and we've talked and pushed and complained and had the union representative give them position papers for the contract negotiations. So far we've simply never succeeded in anything. We are always told there is not enough money to hire more teachers and that is that. Furthermore if there were more money there are teachers we need more in other areas. So we don't know what to do. We have certainly taken initiatives but we have been unsuccessful and to try and find any more imaginative solutions or to try to organize with people in other colleges in the system is what we have not time or energy for. In any oppressive institutional system if you can keep the workers from having time or energy to protest and also make them uneasy about their jobs, you've got them. And add to that that they are replaceable easily, you have completely impotent employees. I don't mean to imply that there is some kind of plot or conspiracy. I don't think there is anybody sitting around somewhere deciding that a teacher shall be oppressed. I think it is simply the way things have fallen out in the course of budget cuts and lack of concern and interest generally.

Again, I dislike the very broad generalization. I dislike myself for talking about the system being oppressive. I don't want to project all of that onto the institution and the system. I know that the sense of not having time has oppressed me since perhaps somewhere along in high school. It is I think a personal problem that I have got to work out through different ways. So I don't want to portray myself as seeing myself the victim of an oppressive system. I think it is much more complicated than that. Partly a victim of certain hang-ups of my own and partly stuck by one fact of the structure that I feel impotent to do anything about and it is indeed very oppressive. I don't see myself as a faceless cog in a big machine or something. In fact it seems to me that jobs like this are one of the few places where one still has a certain amount of personal freedom in terms of deciding your schedule and you have summers to do as you wish. I happen to use most of them in connection with work and teaching but that is a choice and I am certainly not made to do it. I decide what I want to teach. In the last couple of years since we've had the union there is suddenly a lot more paper work and filling out forms and reporting on how you are spending your minutes. This I find indeed very oppressive and disturbing. It is another angle though. I think there certainly is a sense of regret and sorrow that other departments in which the members used to always assign papers have stopped doing so--their course load has gone up to five courses, in sociology, history, and government, and psychology. They have said, all right, tests can now be graded on a machine. And they regret it, they feel it is wrong. Yet they feel that there is no alternative and we would agree, knowing what is involved. It doesn't really help the students.

The other departments have different kinds of problems. If you have a general meeting people are bringing up their problems. Theirs sound equally real to them: problems with staffing, labs, the economics department teaching seventeen courses and only one full-time economics teacher so they are all part-time people, which is not good. There are problems all over--we feel our paper grading thing is the worst but that is because it is ours.

[As a teacher] I think it is simply the very basic human desire to share something that you enjoy, that you find exciting. If you read a story and you think, this is really terrific, you want somebody else to read it and say, "Wow, it really is." That kind of community that comes from shared experience, in this case imaginative experience. I have a real sense of keeping alive a tradition of Matthew Arnold's "the best that has been known and thought." This seems corny but I think that I really do feel that there are these very great things that have been written. I don't really think that they can be made accessible to everybody but I think that they should be made available. They can be made accessible but not meaningful to everyone--that is the distinction I am trying to make. They should be presented as well as possible for the people who can enjoy and appreciate them and respect them. This ties up with what I perceive at least in teaching literature as a very very serious problem. One cannot enjoy or appreciate something that is way beyond one's vocabulary. And with students--these are not all of our students but certainly some of them--who have never read a whole book of any sort and whose vocabulary level is maybe junior high, I think, unless you are a real showman as a presentor of material, sometimes everything backfires and you simply are expecting a student to get excited about or interested in something which just makes no sense to him at all. This I find a very very big problem in teaching. Insofar as literature has provided you with a sense of connection, or escape from loneliness, you want to make that available to people who might be in the same place themselves, floating around in the same dark bay.

Teaching literature is a very small part of what I do so one has to have other kinds of justifications and motivations for much of the freshman comp work. On the one hand there is the need to keep the language usable and train people to use language carefully and thoughtfully and a kind of Orwellian attitude toward the necessity of clear use of language for its connection with a decent public order. On the other hand, I have the strong feeling about the need for people to express their own feelings and experiences and these two very basic concerns often seem to me to be in conflict, at least in terms of the kinds of assignments one gives and the way one responds to them. On the one hand you want people to learn to manage a clear kind of public discourse and learn to read very critically and judgmentally and on the other hand you want to free people to get in touch with their own inner experience. I always feel a real conflict between wanting to encourage autobiographical writing and wanting not to come down on it hard in terms of mechanics because of the fear of inhibiting inexperienced writers, and the opposite: wanting to insist on clarity and logic and wanting it to be as objective and detached as possible. It ties up with the paper-grading business because the papers aimed at the public realm tend to be far worse and far harder to grade and less interesting than those in which kids talk about their own experiences.

Occasionally I lecture from fairly formal notes; more often it is a kind of loose mixture of discussion, my saying things and their saying things, responding or raising questions. In freshman class I do some dividing up into groups, having people work together on projects or papers or whatever. Sometime I have a class with people paired off going over each others' papers, and then I have them rewrite them before I see them, trying to develop two audiences, the student audience as well as the teacher audience.

I guess the classes I like best are those where I feel I've organized material very well for a lecture and presented something substantive. That is the kind of education I had. Certainly not until I was a senior in college did I ever have a course in which very much was expected of students, and I was always perfectly happy with three hundred other people to just listen to a good lecture. I find our students are very different; perhaps because it is a commuting school and there is very little chance outside of class for discussion or because they have very little experience of discussing anything academic outside of class. They depend on the class itself for the stimulation of the discussion and it seems that is very important to the students that they can participate, that they are respected. I find the students are more sensitive than I imagined.

I guess the best classes have probably been those in which a lot of people got very excited and it gets beyond the point of people raising their hands but not to the point of people all shouting at once and everybody is engaged in batting around an idea or subject. This can happen in freshman or lit classes . I had one course that seemed remarkable to me, the first semester freshman English course that was taught out of sequence in the spring semester, and partly for that reason had a very odd mix of students in terms of ages and backgrounds. Some people who had flunked the first time and a number of people who were just beginning. Several much older students. It met twice a week for seventy-five minutes and one of those meetings was Friday afternoon until quarter of four, which is not your preferred time slot usually. It was a class with a remarkable personality. It was a class in which I never knew what time it was, nobody watched the clock, nobody had any sense of time. It was a lot of fun and I felt finally that maybe a couple of the best students in the class who had been very quiet had actually got as much out of it as the others.

I do a lot of advising. I tried to cut down on it some because I think I did much too much of it initially. I was not so much counseling but just simply being there and listening to people who came in and I realized after a point that probably it was simply using up my time and I wasn't helping people who would come in and sit for an hour. Some students you realize have very serious problems and need somebody who can give them help. I can listen and I can certainly make a practical suggestion; if somebody who comes in has a problem with a roommate or rent or something, you can talk about those things. But if somebody's really on the edge of collapse, then I try to suggest they get some professional help. I do a lot of just sitting and listening and talking about things that are not related to school. A lot of the students find it is necessary. In order to work well they need to make that personal connection with the teacher.

I feel I have very mixed success as a teacher. I have some classes and courses that go awfully well, the kind in which many students thank you and tell you how much they have gotten out of it. I have semesters of classes that go very very badly and in which I don't hit it off with the students and they are antagonistic, I feel antagonistic. I get off to a better start with sort of aggressive lively students. I am not easily offended. When I am with a class of very quiet people who are just marking time, I am not awfully good at it. I have gotten better in the last few years--better at creating the mood of the class myself rather than being dependent on the students to create it. Certainly there are semesters or particular classes that are just really flat. Maybe you have one or two students that you feel are getting something out of it but every day when you go in there you think, "Oh, God, here we go again." The last couple of years since there had been all this stuff in the media about the importance of students developing basic skills--the conviction that they hate it but we need it--that doesn't make for joy in the classroom. Then when you turn around and say you have got to write about this literature which you didn't like and didn't understand in the first place and then you are going to get graded on a paper about it, well, you have got a legitimate gripe if you are a student, a legitimate antagonism. I am convinced that a lot of this has to do with the selection of the material. Practically everybody likes to read something, but *what* is the real question.

As our faculty has gotten older, the kind of really young superstar teacher that the students identify with very closely has tended not to find a place, because you have got a larger tenured older faculty who are too tired to be great superstars. There are a few faculty members who were kind of cult figures and have left or were fired some years ago. Faculty, you know, who spent a lot of time sitting around drinking beer with students or being a pal . I was thinking of a picture, I guess, that went through my head when I said that, of the school, and when we were organizing a Vietnam War protest, I just saw this picture of Jim up on top of the post and I'm laughing at that image--the long straggly beard. They were people that I liked. I would be happier if there were more. I don't want to be that, I don't want to be a cult figure myself, but I like there to be such people around. I would be happier if there were more volatile personalities, more abrasive personalities, more characters, performers, stars on the faculty. That would please me very much. It has become quite conservative and safe and probably much more effective, but I miss a little of the color and vitality. I perversely miss the long full faculty meetings where we use to harangue and argue until seven o'clock at night. It was exciting in a way.

I think that in teaching in a community college a big problem is understanding the differences in the situations of the students that I am teaching and my own situation as a student, and simply figuring out how to reconcile the need for academic standards with the very complicated commitments of the students outside of the college. Students are working twenty or thirty hours a week. Many of our students come here because it is small and they feel they have a chance to get to know the faculty. One of the things I think I would like to talk about is the education I am trying to provide or contribute to at this college, what makes it so very different from the education that I received. Since the education I received was terribly important to me, I have the natural desire to perpetuate it. I am always having to come to terms with the difference between what my students want and where they are and where I was.

One of the problems for the students at the community college is the lack of community there. Students drive in and drive out and this contributes to the high attrition rate. Unless students have friends when they come or join an organization that gives them a kind of center on the campus, or find that their classes are kind of cohesive in a social sense, the college can seem very cold despite the relative smallness , despite the possibility of being friendly with one's instructors. I always urge my advisees to join a club if they have any interest, but that is difficult for them too because of the working. We have an arrangement whereby classes stop at two every Wednesday and that is to have our clubs meet but many of the students work in the afternoons .

We have a very wide range of students, certainly students who are better than I ever was as a student, better minds, and I guess I have lost the disdain for very average students that I probably had as a grad student. It becomes intellectually interesting to try to understand where the student who is not very good or not very interested is, and to try to work out ways of reaching that student. One thing I guess is a conviction that I had about intelligence of very different sorts. It is not somebody is ugly or somebody is a bore but people are really bright or really stupid. I realized that I said that a lot and everybody I knew said it. I still know faculty around here whose judgments of other people are always in those terms and I realized that I hated that. It seemed to be such a distortion of the way people's heads really worked and I realized how again different people approach different things.

I have often thought that when I was much younger there were other things I thought of doing and I guess if I had been a man I probably would have been in architecture, which was another interest. But now if I were shifting fields what I would like to do would be some kind of study of different learning styles, different ways people learn. I just have this sense that there are a lot of people who fall out of the school system entirely, people with radically different ways of perceiving the world, ways that the traditional education doesn't make any allowance for, and there is no place for. These people very quickly perceive themselves as failures in school and the whole business of education becomes a repugnant thing to them. I am very interested in the difference between people who can think in a very logical way and people who are much less verbal and therefore do poorly in English courses usually, but who think in terms of images or metaphors or things that don't lend themselves to words.

As a child my real idea of punishment was to be made to stand up while my mother sat down and listen to her discuss at great length what I had done , why it wasn't a good thing to do, and those sessions seemed to be interminable and I always wished I could just get spanked. I suppose it led to a tendency to self-examination which then just extends to the same examination of other people. Or perhaps it is very egotistic; one examines other people when one had better examine oneself--I don't know.

There are students who can't do certain kinds of things that I want them to do and that creates a lot of dilemmas. One of the dilemmas is, should I be trying to get them to do these things? A student who can't seem to organize a paper, say, or who has a lot of trouble with structure. Is it a matter of thinking and experimenting and trying to find different ways of teaching the same things to everybody or is it a matter of trying to do something quite different with a student? Should he be required to learn thus and such? Half the time I say, damn it, look, here it is, this is what the degree from the college means that you have achieved, certain specific things, and you achieve them or you don't, and I give you a grade and that indicates it and that is that. I set the level, you meet it or you don't meet it, or you meet it to a certain degree. And the other half the time I think, here is this person who can't do this and it is absurd for him to spend all of his time trying to learn to do it. He can do a whole lot of other things. Help him to do those things, even if he can do other things with language and literature, let us do those things with him. The hell with the standards and grades and the significance of the degree . It is the individual student whose personal growth or fulfillment or whatever is the only thing that is important. So I am constantly torn between the two positions. That conflict is one of the sources of stress and strain in the job, one of the challenges too I guess.

It becomes a very specific kind of problem in two areas. I think one is the problem of reading level of students that I have mentioned before, which is a very serious dilemma--especially when you are overtrained to teach literature and the students are undertrained to read it. The other area where the dilemma is acute is in trying to understand and clarify in your own mind what is important in English courses for students who are in the vocational programs. This at our school has become a growing problem that I think that we've not in the humanities dealt with very well, thought enough about. The college has changed from essentially a two-year transfer liberal arts college to essentially a vocational training college. What exactly are we trying to do in composition courses and in literature courses? What are our goals? And again one has always got students in those classes, the students who are going to graduate and manage a MacDonald's, and also students who are going to graduate and go to an Ivy League school in the same class, so the problem is really acute. I don't know, I don't know. You can't help but have this feeling of, oh boy, here is this kid going to Smith or Amherst and I can really teach him the stuff that I know, he is right there ready to learn it and you feel qualified to do what you are trying to do , you know how to do it. The student who is going to manage MacDonald's or be a hospital technician, or whatever, it is much harder for me to know what do I know or what skills do I have that are important for this student. I do feel that there are certain outlooks, attitudes, perspectives that are important for anybody but how to get them across is a real dilemma.

I do not think that anybody can get out of King Lear what I can get out of King Lear or that it is a fallacy to think a student who has to struggle to read Hemingway is just absolutely totally lost with Shakespeare. Maybe a real performing kind of teacher, a real actor, can get across King Lear, and I don't mean to deny that. I think there are always real super teachers who can teach practically anything to anybody. But I am not one of them. It comes back to the problem of what do you teach and how. I think between these dilemmas and the problem of time and correcting I have always the sense of failing, never doing as much or as well as I can imagine doing, coupled with the sense of succeeding very well at times with particular students and particular courses. When you are teaching you tend to think in terms of the way you have been taught, unless you are really in rebellion against it, and I was not. Then if you try to say, "To hell with the standards and the grades, what really counts is the individual student learning what he can learn for his own use and learning it in his own way, making some kind of growth, whether it has anything to do with what he traditionally has achieved at the end of a year in an English course," if you say that , then you find yourself in the rather presumptuous position of assuming you can make your course of thirty people suitable to differing needs of each one of them. Which is practically not possible. And presumptuously assuming that involves your breathing down his back all the time and getting all tangled up in his psyche perhaps. Whereas these students are working out their lives and taking their courses, they have particular goals and many of them would be perfectly happy to go through your course and get a D or get a C. They probably didn't get very much out of your course but they are happy, they are quite satisfied with that and you know they should have that, that right, to take it or leave it and know that there are ideals or standards and it is up to them how they want to cope with them. I remember working very hard in a very rigorous zoology course, thinking it was awfully good and I got a lot out of it, and got a 78 or 80 or something. I had the satisfaction of having done as well as I could, and I wouldn't have got anything out of the course having been watered down or personalized in some way . It was out there, I was an autonomous person, I could cope with it.

It seems it comes down in a very practical teaching situation to the problem of how long are you going to spend on a run-on sentence and semi-colons and is this a waste of time or is this not. If you decide one semester, well, by Jove, this semester nobody is going to write a run-on sentence at the end of my class, in the process of seeing that they don't, then you have lost a whole lot of other things that have just gone by the wayside and everybody comes out thinking the whole of English is subsumed in the semi-colon. Maybe I just feel that if I am going to keep a certain amount of energy and optimism and enthusiasm about the whole business I have got to assume that the source is in myself; because I can work with myself and change myself and try things at least and experiment.

One real advantage of feeling secure in a job and reasonably confident is not minding failing and so I do different things from semester to semester or I try things and sometimes they work very well and sometimes they are a real disaster. But if I just said, "Well, it is a structure that I can't do anything with," then my choices are either to go out and work politically to change the structure or give up, and I don't want to do either .

I think that sense of failure is due to the structure. I can live with the ways in which I pretty well know where my strengths as a teacher lie and I can maximize the strengths and avoid getting into the weaknesses. I am just human, I am not upset by that particularly. The sense of failure comes always from the feeling that you could do so much more if you had more time and you would have time if you had fewer students and less paper grading and more time to work with students individually and that certainly is directly connected with the structure. On the other hand, the problem of very diverse abilities among students in one class would remain even if one had only thirty students, and the conflict of how to set standards and a uniform program and to what extent to provide individual programs would still exist, and most of us have had that situation --through some fluke low student load or a small class . And that I think is a problem that is independent of the structure unless you want to go back and talk about the whole structure of education in the grade schools and the high schools and the whole thing.

Frankly I am not aware of [the women's movement] having done much of anything in terms of my teaching in a community college. There are a fair number of women on the faculty and I never thought about it in that context. There were practically no women on the faculty at the universities when I was there, at least in English. There was one marvelous woman who was there but was unable to get a full-time job because her husband had the full-time position. She was a superb teacher but again the implication was that if you happen to marry another one, forget it. One was encouraged to go on to graduate school and go to a good grad school and to have a Wilson scholarship that would prepare one to be a college teacher and yet there was no evidence that one would ever be hired at a place like the one you had gone to.

I always think of my Ph.D. dissertation as related to my teaching in the community college because I had been working on a textbook which became the dissertation. So I don't think of it as if I had done it on Spencer or something. I sense now that I am further and further away from the things that I studied in college and graduate school. I think less and less about them and teach them less and less. For many years I taught a British Lit course and I haven't done that for several years now. First I taught the whole course for a few years and then I taught the first half because we had to take turns and then I stopped teaching it entirely. Last year I taught the first half of an American Lit course and used a new book and it gave me a chance to read a lot of stuff that I hadn't read before, particularly 17th and 18th century things that were not imaginative literature but more historical documents, and that was wonderful. I really enjoyed that. And had a good class and felt again that I was doing what I had been trained for and this was very nice. I find I have lost whatever interest that I once had in scholarly journals. Once in a while I will pull out an article relevant to something, some particular book that I was teaching. I guess the challenge of trying to figure out, in terms of literature at least, what to teach and how remains, and I enjoy that. I am always reading new things. Initially one reason that I worked on the textbook was as a way of making interesting the routine of teaching a lot of freshman composition. That seemed to me a creative response to a problem.

Now what I will do in the future I am not sure. I am not really very interested in revising my book endlessly. Even in between editions this past fall I did something totally different that I had never done before in a freshman course, didn't use my own book or anything. It makes me kind of sad sometimes not to use a lot of the things that I know, it seems kind of unfortunate. When I get really frustrated with papers I start thinking of going into the computer programming curriculum at the college and taking a two-year degree in that and getting a job at Digital and working an eight-hour day.

In the best of all possible worlds if one could get some stuff published and then occasionally have a semester off to work on that, and to teach a creative writing course somewhere,that would be fun. The only thing that really makes me want to get out and change is the paper-grading problem.

I don't see these enormous changes that the media thrive on. I tend to see much more continuity in students. When one reads constantly that the students were this and students were that, it seemed to me that students were pretty much what students had always been. I think certain extremes are there, unusual kinds of people, and students are encouraged in different periods. But there is a very steady mainstream running through that doesn't change very much. I guess this conviction is also greatly strengthened by my weeks in the hospital [after an automobile accident] and watching people in there, where people are dealing on a pretty basic level of relationship and concerns.

I don't think in terms of family very much, not having family, and I realized how central family and family connections are to most people's lives--extended families of brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts and uncles. I thought many of the people in the hospital, their families, were very much like many of our students. Of my fifteen roommates practically all of them either had a neighbor or cousin or a kid who had gone to the community college and one of the roommates was in fact a student here now. One gets to feel very kindly toward people when one is lying in bed four feet away from them. And my sense of the school's centrality in my life was very much strengthened too because an awful lot of faculty members came by to visit and a lot of students did too and I was glad to see them. I could count on people. I also kept working. Graded papers and made up exams and graded exams, and that was the same sort of drag that it usually is, but I never felt bored--I always had work to do.

Profile

ELIZABETH MCKAY

(Elizabeth McKay, in her late thirties, teaches reading and English in a metropolitan California community college. She was interviewed in the summer of 1981, in her office at the college.)

Well, it all started with a blue velvet collar. My uncle was a biology teacher in a small teachers' college in Texas. I can still remember the night that he dressed for one of the commencement exercises in the summer being very impressed by the fact that this man that I ordinarily saw in his work sleeves was outfitted in this magnificent robe with this velvet collar. And I said, "Someday I'm going to wear one of those collars." And in fact, someday, maybe if I ever finish, I will. So I think I started early wanting to be a teacher. Maybe the truth of the matter is, the only thing that I learned to do is to read. So when the choice came for making a career I didn't have a lot of options. I was rotten in math. I was not skilled with my hands. I needed something to do that I could do and that happened to be things that had to do with books because I was always a reader.

I guess I knew by the time I was maybe sixteen that I had to work. There was no question of a sort of luxurious sampling about. I needed to work. So I finished high school, college, and the university as quickly as I could. I met a very influential teacher at the university. He made me feel like I could connect with literature. I went on then to graduate school, got my master's under him. I admired very much his teaching style; he was very quiet, very understated. In my first semester of teaching as a TA, I had never spoken before to a large group of people and it was the most horrendous experience of my life. I mean I would throw up from nervousness and go to class and teach as best I could about grammar to a bunch of football players. I remember longing for my teacher's wonderful style and orderly presentation because I was just panicked. Then I would leave class and throw up again and it went on and on and on for the whole semester. I have often wondered what happened to those poor students who had me because it must have been hell. The next semester things got a little bit better because I found out that if you met with them individually you could actually begin to make relationships, create some connections, and get some learning done. And that was such an exciting experience. I became fascinated by the fact that that there would be adults in the university who couldn't spell.

I got my master's the next year and my husband and I for various family kinds of reasons came out to California on vacation. We were just going to be here for three days or something and we crossed the Golden Gate Bridge and I said, "This is where I want to live." So we went home and in two weeks sold what property we had and packed everything that we owned in a little TR4 and drove out here. We didn't have a place to live, we didn't have work. Little did I know that we were just part of a really gigantic migration. I mean there were thousands of kids just like us coming during 1964 or 1965. I was maybe twenty-four or twenty-three coming out here. We found a place to live and I applied to various junior colleges because I had a master's and that was about all I could do. And at that time the college was housed in an old bunch of Army portables, barracks. There was no brick and cement monster like there is now. It was an old trade school. The academic part of it, English, had been added very recently, like 1962 or something, and so all of the academic faculty had been hired almost at once. I remember thinking I don't know if I can take this funky place. In fact I couldn't get work anywhere else really, and this college offered me a contract right away . I was hired to teach reading, the only problem being that I had never taught reading. Over the next two years, I guess, I began to realize that what I had been teaching, the typical remedial reading, was not meeting the needs of the students . I was teaching them survey techniques and they were asking me how to pronounce a four-letter word. There was a real sense of a mismatch. No wonder we had huge dropout rates. So I began to fiddle around again. When I don't know what else to do I start working one-to-one to try and figure out what's happening.

A particular student that I remember was named James Wharton. James was a basketball player, and his coach had recommended that he really ought to learn to read and he was a real tough guy. But James couldn't read. And so I sat down with him and figured out how to reconstruct his whole first three years of education. How do you teach an adult the names of the letters of the alphabet, the shapes, so that he could write? How do you teach him to put the letters together? All I remember was what seems now like hours and hours of sitting at the desk with him. But in fact he did learn to read and he went on and graduated from college. He was a real street person. I mean he had the gift of gab. He was much too smart not to learn to read. And in a way that was a turning point for me because I realized he was too smart and that there was something crazy in the fact that he hadn't learned to read. Then I began to see the Jameses multiply. And we got a little grant, a "right-to-read" grant about 1970 to set up a small group in an individual instruction program for students like James. People like James began to literally appear out of the woodwork. I mean we would have seventy-five and one hundred people sign up for a class and at that point I began to realize that there was a question under the questions: why are all of these students, and why these students and not other students, failing to get the rudimentary skills that twelve years of education should be giving them?

So at about that time I started my career over because at that point I applied to graduate school. I was certain that the answers had to be there. Then, I thought, from here on it's clear sailing because it's going to be so simple. I just go and find the right books and I come back and then I understand it and I go on to something else. Well, that was eight years ago and I am still working. I was pregnant. I got pregnant with the third baby, and I also found out at that time that it wasn't so simple.

I was born in the Southwest. My mother and father were divorced when I was three. My mother remarried, we moved to Arkansas, then to El Paso. Those were difficult years for me and the escape that I found for bad times was books. I spent high school very much in the fifties style, cheerleader, football, all that kind of thing. Really school disappeared for me. I mean it wasn't important. Then at about sixteen it hit me that I was about ready to earn a living. And so I hit the books and figured the only way I was going to do it was through school. So that's when I finished high school and got out and went on to college. In my family I could see that my mother was going to be in financial need one of these days. My stepfather was, I don't know, things were just not working out very well, and I wanted to be independent. I can remember my grandmother saying, "You want to be sick? Get your education so that you can take care of yourself no matter what happens." And I began to see the shape of things, that I was going to have to take care of myself no matter what happened. And that meant getting my act together and so I did. I think there weren't a whole lot of women-type opportunities. There just wasn't really an option when I was growing up to become a business person, or a doctor. I just didn't have that kind of background.

I went to school to work, to get out, and my senior year I finished the year's work by January and I started college. Since I had not made plans to go to college particularly and not really thought about where I would go or taken SAT tests, it was largely a question of convenience, what was cheap, what was close, where I could get in. In high school I didn't take secretarial skills, I didn't take typing, so I must have taken the regular college track. I recall it as being very unstimulating. It must have been college-bound, but it wasn't what we think of as being really exciting stuff.

I had a great time at college. I was for awhile a photography major. It was a really good department. At the same time I took a lot of journalism, writing, and English classes; they pretty much let me do whatever I wanted to do. I struggled at that time with my difficulty with math and I can remember spending hours in conferences trying to figure out how to understand minus one. But I finally got through algebra. Then I transferred to the state university. I went as a junior and then I met my husband in the hall outside of Spanish class. He was an anthropology major and I was in folklore and English, and we both finished the next year. He was a conscientious objector at a time that it wasn't easy to get CO status if you weren't a fundamentalist. So we went through the business of the FBI investigating his sincerity and then at one point his request was denied and he had to decide whether to go to jail or join the Army. He joined the Army for six months and then shortly after that we came out here. I was a good student by then. By the time I was a junior I was a master at writing a paper and studying for an exam. I can remember learning how to do that.

[When we came here] just the ocean, the way the air was, the green, you have to think of coming from desert--I lived all my life in the desert where everything is brown; it's different shades of brown but it is all brown. The thing about the country here is that that you have so many colors. We needed to pull roots up and we didn't have anywhere to put them and this was the place to put roots. We didn't have any reason not to move, so we moved. We were part of that surge that was somehow connected to anti-Vietnam, the whole civil-rights thing and all the rest of it. I mean we were part of that although you don't see yourself as part of a movement till much later.

I started going around to all the colleges and putting in applications. I knew that a master's degree was the basic requirement, and a California credential, which I was able to get. I knew that was what was required to get a job and I don't think I ever even thought of anything else. The thing about this community college I guess is that we have moved from being a very self-contained little group, very tight faculty, to being much more bureaucratized, district-centered, and a much more fragmented faculty. One of the facts of life here is that nothing is ever planned, it's all crisis, catch up. There is a sense of hurry, of sort of impending doom, because you're not clear whether the budget is really in place or whether tutors that you've hired are going to be paid. Once that's accepted as part of the way of operating then it becomes very benign neglect. I mean nobody bothers me. In fact I get a lot of support. The programs actually that I have been involved in have tended to be supported fully, so it isn't exactly as if it's a negative situation. Everybody here has been here practically since this became an academic institution and we all pretty much know what the other person can do. So scheduling of classes and that kind of thing is mostly a problem of juggling times and rooms. People are pretty well established. I do basic literacy type work. Other people do what you think of as straight college level. A few people swing between the two fields. We don't have a separation into a learning skills and a real English department. They are seen as pretty fluid. And I could teach any kind of class I wanted to; it is just more a question of choice, of demands of the program.

My days start here about 8:30. I come in, open the rooms, make sure that nothing has been stolen over the night, lay things out for whatever class is coming in. I usually have three kinds ongoing each day: one is meeting with students and small-group kind of instruction. I'm talking now about the reading classes. I usually teach the students that for one reason or another would present problems to tutors either because they are rowdy or they have serious learning problems or they're non-readers. So I sort of take whatever group of students needs special help and I have certain teaching routines that have worked well. Sometimes I get them started and then circulate. At that point I am no longer working directly with students but I'm working with the tutor. Maybe I'll be demonstrating a particular teaching technique or helping the students, helping the tutor organize the group.

The groups are very different. I mean we've got everything from a group that will be mostly Asian speakers to people who are here trying to brush up for some kind of examination. It's a question of shifting gears pretty rapidly, but there's nothing like ten years of practice to make that really not a problem. A full teaching load is five classes, which we all have now, including composition teachers. So I will probably have three reading classes. One day is set aside for a special class which is essentially in-service, or pre-service, training for the people who have been hired to work with our students. In the tutoring class I am responsible for teaching things like how to give the tests, so that there is a fair amount of reliability. How to conduct the curriculum, how to work through the various pieces that need to be instructed, and group management, that kind of thing, how to get along with people, how to make learning happen. We did last year a long session on sign language and how to work with the translator. One year we specialized in ESL, so those become sort of like seminars to help to serve the particular groups that we come in contact with.

This project we have been working on for a couple of years called the Bridge Program was designed originally to integrate reading, writing, and math for students who had been through the basic skills, but were not making any kind of progress. The program was designed to try to help people make some choices and literally teach how the system works so that they would know how to go about selecting classes, how to read the catalogue. That is just part of being sophisticated about going to school. So I will work in that program with a team of two other teachers and a group of tutors.

After teaching is done I usually then try to neaten up the administrative part. That is my responsibility in the department, taking care of all the kind of paper work that has to be done in order to keep the tutors hired, to make sure that their paychecks come in on time, to make sure of our accounting. We are required to have a certain amount of information on each student for the state because our tutors are partly paid by vocational-education-act money.

The other part of my day is office hours, so to speak. Usually if I don't have people needing to see me, I will go to what I think of as my own work. I will make appointments with students that I need to interview, or ask them to take a test out loud so that I can try to figure out something about how they are processing what they read. Also during that time, what I think of as my time, will be conferences or chats , those kinds of just amiable sitting in the quad and visiting times. That person could be a tutor, it could be a teacher, it could be a student. That's pretty much what a day looks like. I don't have a lot of paper correcting or that kind of planning to do so pretty much when I leave, unless we are under some crisis, I leave it at school. I don't carry much work home with me.

There is no department chair that you somehow have to clear things with. It is very horizontal. The same thing is true with tutors, because after two months with them you are literally team teaching. Some of them have been here for years, six, seven, eight years. Many of them are retired. There will be another set of young people who are looking for teaching careers who think they might like to do this kind of work and people who have to go to school and support themselves on part-time jobs. Going to school takes a long time and it may take them six years to do four years of work, so we have tutors who have been with us all the time that they are maybe getting their master's. And then there are student-tutors who in fact have just learned themselves to read and if they have a special way with people, I'll invite them to train as tutors.

I just didn't have much interest in the regular "1A" kids. My interest was much more in the other kind of students. I have really been interested for a long time in this question: why in the hell can't these guys who are so together in so many ways do well in school? I mean, what is it that American education needs to do to utilize some of that energy? Like James. James was just a hot-shot guy who was standing around on the street corners and it literally seems to be a turn of the wrist that moves the direction in a different way and helps a person to grab hold of a different network, a different set of structures. So I am interested in how people do that, how people make connections that they hadn't been able to make before in school. You don't find that so much in 1A. My particular interest is the people who really can't function at all in school.

After five or six years of teaching here I was at the top of the salary scale. There is nowhere else for a teacher to go unless you want to be an administrator which I don't particularly. You become good at what you do. There are a lot of people that I can't teach but given a sort of a very rudimentary motivation on their part it is not really very hard to teach people to read. It's a lot harder to teach them to succeed in school, to teach them how to integrate a whole lot of required skills, like how to get along with teachers, how to manage financial aid without getting in fights. I had one student that I am thinking of. Martin came to us a couple of years ago, could not read beans, most unpleasant creature I ever knew. I thought to myself, this guy is a total creep. He sort of struggled through the first semester. About the middle of the second semester I had another student who was an expert card player. He could just do card tricks you would not believe. And one day he was showing me some tricks, and Martin happened to walk in. He came in and said, "That happened to me once, I got on the bus..." For the first time Martin launched into a real story. I said, "Martin, that's marvelous, write it down." From then on, he was just going. He still is around. He's in the regular program now, he doesn't take remedial classes anymore, although he still needs them, I think. He organized a citizen's watch on buses and I see him on TV about once every two weeks.

I remember a day that I had to leave one of my children--who was really sick and I was so angry--to come to work. As I walk onto the campus I drink my last swallow of coke. Somehow it's a kind of signal that okay, now all that has to stay behind because you are at work. And that's the way it is. There's no turnover--that's one of the weird things about this particular time in community colleges. I think that a lot of the stuff that I do would be great training for a new teacher, but there's no new teachers and so there is nobody to pass it on to.

I'm real interested in classroom talk. I feel that something incredible happens and it can go bad or it can go very right and I would like to be able to make it more clear for myself. So what I have been doing for the last five years or so is just recording a lot of talk. I have a lot of tapes of students answering questions, you know, how come you picked that answer? Then I have a lot of reading group stuff where different students read and then a tutor will ask questions and I am interested in the kinds of responses they make. The thing that I am working on right now is writing conferences. And there seems to be a pretty clear connection between writing fluency and a sort of, not necessarily a smooth communication with the teacher, but at least a negotiated agreement as to what is going on here, what you are supposed to be writing about.

Each year that I had children they came with me to work for the first few months. In a certain way it works very well; personally for me, it's very hard. I mean my kids are really delights and they are at a wonderful age: the fourteen-year-old is sure he is going to be a rock guitarist and the thirteen-year-old is a naturalist and my daughter is full of energy being eight. I mean there is this great sense of exploding, coming, becoming . So personally I feel the pull of wishing there were more hours in the day. In terms of my relationship with students here, I think it is very handy because I truly understand when a woman's child is in juvenile hall, I mean there is an empathy that if I weren't a parent, I don't think I would have. I think it is also good for my kids to see that their mother works. My daughter has come to class with me and I'm glad that she knows that working is a real option. As a wife I think probably my husband gets the shortest end of the stick. The things that he thinks are important, like going camping, are the things that I don't get around to doing.

I have not felt at a disadvantage for being white here at this college although I think it gives lots of problems just in terms of you have to get to know how to read the answers that you are getting sometimes. And I don't know whether Black teachers have that problem or not. This is my fish bowl that I swim in pretty easily, so I don't think it limits my work particularly. You do learn how to dress, you really are careful not to look too sloppy because if you do then you bring down bad judgments on you, not to be too sexy because if you do then you have to put up with an awful lot of crap , so you learn how to be neutral, like driving a car, how to steer past all the possible places where you can overturn.

There are a lot of women here, wonderful women. They are the pillars of the community, they run the churches, they run the bake sales, they collect the money, they are the nurses. Betty came up here when she was about twenty-four. I was real interested in why she hadn't learned to read because she was such a nice person and so bright. She had a lot of trouble getting along with teachers in high school and so she came here, learning to read, tutored with me for a long time, and then her husband was shot and she had two children to raise. She had to get a real job, so I haven't seen her, but she was the most cheerful person. Carol, another one, did a paper on nonviolence, and she was so excited by the notion that Gandhi and King had so much in common. There is great depth in women.

I've been here a long time, and I know there is something very satisfying to me about knowing how to make the system work. There is a sense of knowing how people work together, who does what. It's one of the reasons that I wouldn't particularly think about changing jobs, because to go back and recreate those networks of friendship would be just too much to start at this time in my life. I mean you have enough shared knowledge in terms of what we think is important that you don't have to go back and recreate a context every time you open your mouth. There is a sense of people that you can take an idea to and together collaborate and shape it into something that you wouldn't have necessarily turned it into if you were working competitively or if you were working alone. Another area is working with the tutors, and there is a sense of real help, growing competence and interest. There is something about seeing people grab hold, whether they are tutors or students, to ideas that you think are important, and see them shape them in their own way. That makes coming to work a generally satisfying kind of thing. I feel like the tutors are real close to me. The students become real close and many of them I keep up with as they go off to do other stuff.

There is something about working with students. I am much more interested in the possibility that change comes through relationships than that it comes through a program of instruction or computers or whatever. I mean I don't think those things are opposed to change or to improved learning, it's just that I somehow see the ground as being much more in the exchanges than I do with the material or the book or something out there. I keep exploring that possibility. It is almost like trying to figure what makes home home. I thought about whether or not one of my ideas was that I was somehow righting social wrongs and I think I probably have enough of the avenging angel in me to make that a constant danger. But I think , my experience at least with tutors here is, that do-gooders don't last. [Do-gooders] have the sense that you are going to teach people to read so as to show them the proper political persuasion or shape them in any sense of how you want them to turn out. You simply can't do that, and the people who come here with that in mind just don't stay. To really make somebody hang around, it has to be a more relaxed sort of flowing commitment and it's just nice, as opposed to "my duty."

I think it is true that I do feel a real abiding anger at the fact that there could have been so many kids, perfectly okay human beings, who were not mentally deficient or culturally deprived or anything else, that are regular folks that just have been terribly screwed up in school. To me that is just really a crime. But it's not something you can carry around with a very heavy hand. Also I just enjoy teaching. I worked hard to figure out certain teaching routines that I think work well that I enjoy doing, and it's like any nightclub act or stand-up comic. You've learned to do it and you enjoy doing it and other people get involved in the act, so to speak. It's just a lot of fun.

I like being well paid. I am doing what I enjoy doing and I am being paid to do it, about $30,000 a year. (I have ninety hours beyond a BA.) Then I do a considerable amount of inservice, and any extra kinds of duties that I do here I get a little extra, so I feel like I am really well paid. It's a kind of job too, that has a flexible scheduling which, with three kids and doctors' appointments and one has to be at school at 8:30 and one has to be there at 10 and one has to be picked up at 2 and one has to be picked up at 3, you pretty much have to be able to juggle a schedule around and this has always permitted me to do that. When I had my first baby I could put him in the little faculty cottage and hired a student to sit there and watch him while I was teaching. And then I could go between classes and nurse him and then teach an hour and then take him home. [When] we had a new department chair, he was doing his very best to do a good job. So he asked me to dothe inservice and we had a day from classes and we have a very isolated group of teachers in the sense that I mean each one closes their door and works separately and each one is convinced that they are right. My point in the inservice, as I remember, was that what we needed to do was to begin to share what we need with each other and go into different classes and see what was happening. I mean that was the message. The particular techniques that I talked about, as I remember, the one that I really remember was, did people know how hard the books were that they were giving their students to read and did they know the reading levels of the students? And I started explaining a procedure for checking reading levels and who was comprehending, the procedure leaving out every fifth word. And the lady who taught ESL raised her hand and said,"That's just a terrible thing to do to anybody to ever ask them to sit down and do that kind of thing. And I wouldn't do it and I don't want to be here anymore while you are talking about it." And she got up and walked out and she hasn't spoken to me since and that's been five years. And that wasn't even personal work,I mean that was real practical.

One of the reasons that this is so satisfying for me is that it is relatively new. It's only been in the last five years I suppose that I have experienced colleagueship because before I had done what I had done pretty much alone. I did my book without ever showing it to anybody except the editor. I've just never made many contacts with people until the last few years.

When I compare working in a community college to the university, the teaching load here is much heavier. Also nobody gives brownie points at a community college for think time. I mean that just doesn't come with the territory. So there isn't any built-in, whatever you want to call it, synthesizing time. In fact, one of the perennial agonies that we had over the Bridge Program was no time set aside. Whatever you do, you do on the run; that is the way it is.

I need time to do more work. You somehow don't get the time to do the work until you have done the work. It's strange. The Ph.D., I have protected it, and covered it over and said, this is mine and don't mess around with it. It's much better not to talk about the things that you care about. I get up at 3:30 or 4; I read till it's time to go to school, get the kids up. I study weekends, whenever the family goes off on a hiking trip or scouts or whatever. Then I just study solid. If you just imagine streamlining everything else, then the hours that are saved go into studying. If that makes sense. This is the first time I have ever talked seriously about my work to anybody except for teachers that I work with. As I get more clear about it, I think the worlds might come together more. And I don't know really any other way to get it done except to define hours so peculiarly. I've done it for years. Every paper that I finish is with rock and roll downstairs and girls putting make-up on in the bathroom, and the house just seethes with activity. You have to choose. Are you going to sit right in the middle of all of that and try to work sensibly, which actually I have learned to do to some extent, or are you going to do it at weird times. And then either way, how do you blend those things. I say to my kids, the paper is finished. Mom, that's wonderful. But they don't want to hear about it.

There are silences. I mean there are these long periods when nothing comes together. What I have learned to do with it is use it as sort of unaware think time, and I would just clean the hell out of the Persian rugs and make the laundry room absolutely spick and span and during that time suddenly a new piece will come into place. I'm not sure that there is any other way to go about it. Except some day I am going to write for a grant and have a whole year off. This is my first summer off in ten years and it has been fantastic. I've worked almost all day, almost every day, it's been super.

We came out here and tried to make the new society and through that failure or whatever you want to call it, we really found out the depths and breadths of each other and I don't think that would have happened if we hadn't done exactly what we did. Put money into a ranch that we didn't own, lived part of the time in the city, part of the time out on the ranch. If we hadn't done all those things, we would have always wondered if it would work and now we know that it doesn't work and it's okay. In addition to that there is sort of a level where my husband and I found each other . When my kids now ask questions about drugs we are able to be real clear. I see so many adults with fourteen-year-old children say, "Sure, have some grass." My husband and I , neither of us mess around with anything because we are really clear that it totally messes up your life, totally and completely and with no holds barred puts you at the bottom. So there are no questions with my kids.

There is no respect for what I think of as my work, work beyond the immediate getting the job done, grading the papers, that kind of thing. Into the junior college system is not built the respect for that. The ivory tower is not well-thought-of in the junior college. It's where all those people who don't know anything stay, and in an accounting system where being cost effective is the by-word there is no respect, so you get it from both ends, in a way.

These days there are enough versions of being a woman to make it less automatic for certain people. I think that probably I picked the hardest version of being a woman who works, who's intensely involved with her children. I mean I have thrown more papers in the paper route than you can shake a stick at. And at the same time I have this burning fire of concerned interest, intellectual effort. I read Anthony Giddons for fun, I like him, I enjoy reading him. There's not another person that I know who shares quite all those bags. It isn't being a woman per se that is the problem; it's the accoutrements that have to go through the eye of the needle at the same time. I mean, three kids, two dogs, twenty chickens, my mother, my husband's parents, the bass guitar, camp--you know, to try and shove all of that through and not lose any pieces. If I were a man it would be more recognized. And you would probably even be permitted to walk around with a book in your hand and stumble into light posts and not bring home a paycheck and probably people would understand that is just the way you are. Where with a woman those same qualities are she is really a bad mother, she's a bad wife. I have to be careful about making sure that dinner is planned and that I can get it on the table by six o'clock, no matter what else happens during the day, and that is not because of any pressure that my husband puts on me, that's because of the pressure I put on me. I mean, that's just part, that's paying my dues to being a woman,being a wife, being a mother. And it's true I can buy off with the kids and change around and get other people to do my jobs and they are really supportive of that, but in the end I know that I've got to do laundry. And there is a certain sense in which that is very grounding. I mean, the day I finished my book was New Year's Day; I had gotten up at six in the morning, came down here to the community college and typed the last section of the manuscript and I got home about four in the afternoon. My husband and new baby and older son were sitting on the steps waiting for me and there was never a moment ever like that moment. It's a sense of having more than one place that I don't think if I weren't a woman I would have. I mean, I have two , I have two places at least, but I have two real well-carved-out places and it's important. The only thing is that you feel the lack of the mixture that was there, it being hard to share that fire.

Profile

PHILIP CAMPBELL

(Philip Campbell, in his forties, teaches English at a suburban community college in California. He was interviewed in his office in the summer of 1980.)

I am a fifth-generation Californian. My great-great-grandfather came to California in a covered wagon before the Gold Rush and branches of the family settled throughout California. I grew up in a small town about one hundred miles south of here and went to public school there. I grew up back in the fifties, went to high school in the fifties. A small California town where the biggest thing that happened was when you graduated from high school. The be-all and the end-all was the high school graduation. I was expected to do well.

When I got into high school, back in those days, there wasn't the same kind of pressure, certainly not in the place where I went to school, about going to college. The choices were fairly static. A lot of kids that I went through high school with went immediately into the service, and I can remember exploring the different branches of the armed forces when I was a sophomore or a junior, pre-Vietnam, post-Korea. I went to a counselor one time and he suggested that probably college would be all right. I had taken the college preparatory courses but there was not a big deal--certainly there wasn't any kind of expectation about going on. So when I graduated from high school and decided to go on to a community college, it represented for me a very big step. It was a big deal to go forty miles from home to the college.

Both my parents had been to college and there was a great deal of interest in my progress in school. I was the oldest of three boys, and one of the things that I think I learned early was to play the game, succeed in school, get good grades on my report card. I can remember having a tremendous crush on my third-grade teacher and being terribly devastated when she married some returning G.I. I was a terrible speller. I despaired of ever getting a perfect spelling paper. I would do anything to get 100 on one of my little spelling tests. Finally got 100. Open house night came and my parents arrived. I took them proudly up to my 100% perfect spelling test. With sudden horror I discovered that I had misspelled my name on this one test.

I had nightmares about my first grade teacher until I was twelve. My first grade teacher was a horrible old woman. She used to rap children soundly with rulers. There was one kid, Doug. Doug had rheumatic fever and she explained to us that she couldn't hit him because he had been sick. So instead she humiliated him by putting him up in front of the class in a special place. The dunce, "dummy Doug," on more than one occasion she pronounced him. And we would all laugh--at least we were not as bad as Doug.

My father ran his business much of the time right out of the house. He was a land surveyor and kept his maps and calculator in the dining rooom and his equipment in the garage. The neighborhood was filled with a lot of areas to play, vacant lots, places where bullies lived who would chase you home. As the oldest I always felt that it was unfair because there was so much expected of me. I had to drag little brothers around all the time, watch out for them and make sure that they did not get run over. I had a succession of close friends and used to go everywhere on my bike. After my father's death my mother went to work for the school district as a secretary.

I was not good at sports. That was one of the things where it was kind of a barrier. And when I began to make friends on my own, my friends from about the age of twelve on tended to be brighter boys who were loners. Those kinds of friendships were much more important to me when I got into high school, because when I got to high school that real isolation set in. It was a small town and there was a great deal of emphasis placed on the popular, doing a lot of dating and sports activities. None of those things was I particularly proficient in. And so that tended to increase the isolation even more. High school was a very traumatic time for me. Since then I have learned a lot of people have had a terribly traumatic experience going through high school. If you are not immensely popular and not very successful at something or another, that can be a really harrowing experience. Even today I get invitations to go back for reunions and I haven't gone back.

The group that I was associated with, my friends, increasingly saw ourselves as intellectuals, somehow separate from the jocks, separate from the pom pom girls. Many of my friends were very much into science, and rockets were in. We used to design little hand-made rockets, shoot them off, and fancy ourselves Werner Von Braun on the same range. Sputnik was, of course, around '57 very much in the air. And a lot of my reading then was science fiction in high school.

College was one of the options that was there, but it certainly was not one that was pushed. The fact that you had that military obligation--that was something that was very important. We thought of it in those days as something we had to get out of the way. We always spoke of "getting your service out of the way." I think there was always the general assumption that I would go to college at some point but what I would do was always fairly nebulous. I had taken the college prep courses all the way through. Here I was planning to go into engineering and my math background was terribly weak, because no one had ever said you have really got to take four years of math. I didn't take chemistry when I was supposed to, I didn't take high school physics. And when I went on to college I had courses to make up.

I had a great sense that getting away was important. I went through all the hoops--took the SAT test and applied for the scholarship and it wasn't until I made the initial contact with the community college that it really came through as an option. I really had the feeling that I was leaving home, making the break.

At that time the college was probably unique among community colleges in terms of the diversity of students. The first class I walked into there were three Arabs and a Nigerian. And older students--I will never forget coming away from that first class--there were guys in there in their late twenties. It was a whole new kind of world. From the beginning I had the sense that people cared and that it was a place where I could take some risk. My father was an engineer, a land surveyor, and my first major was engineering. I decided that was what I wanted to do, to be an engineer. I took two math classes, and those two math classes convinced me that this was not what I was cut out for. Most of the people that I went to high school with didn't go on. A lot of them stayed there in town and got jobs. It was rather unusual for people to go to the community college. I remember there were probably thirty or forty of us who rode over there on the bus, so that was a kind of special brotherhood as well.

What else can I remember? It was just extraordinary for me to discover people with totally different values. There were some first rate instructors. One of the reasons why I ended up going into English was because the teacher was very supportive when I took my freshman composition class. Read some of my essays and said, "You have a real gift." The praise and the attention was extremely important for me. It was an idea of my succeeding in a new area, in a new kind of contest, different from back in high school where you could get away with horsing around, and if you were in advanced senior English that meant that you were one of the bright kids, you really didn't have to work, you could coast. The class that made the greatest impression on me was a course in geology. I have maintained this interest in geology ever since. It was fulfilling a science requirement.

One of the things we did in my history class was to ride the big yellow school bus one day up to the city on our own. This was the first time I had ever been to the city on my own. We spent the day walking and looking at different communities . I have the college yearbook and there is a photograph of this in '57 or '58, you know--those incredible square head haircuts, our madras jackets. That is where I met my wife. We were in the lit class together the last semester that I was at the community college.

By the time I got through I had a great deal more confidence. I could not, as a freshman, have conceived of going to a university. It was just too much, too mammoth. By the time I finished I had been to the university twice. I knew that I was going to be an English major. I had some general idea that I was going to go into teaching. I really had grown so much in those two years. I am sure that it was at that point that I decided that I was going to go into community college teaching. That brought me to the university in 1958.

I did all right because of a couple of things. First of all, Louise and I had already decided that we would marry soon. That was important, I had an anchor. Secondly, because I knew what I wanted to do. I knew that I was going to be an English major. And third, because of a professor at the university. He always kind of liked me. But the first semester I was at the university, despite all of my positive things about the community college, I was thrust into this world, my parents were just barely able to support me. It was that professor's first semester too, and he was a marvelous man. In class, and more than that, outside of class, he was very supportive of me and read several of my attempts at poetry at that time, and was just an all-round good decent man at a time when I really needed someone, because I was not at all sure I had done the right thing. All the rest of my classes were large lecture type. Despite the fact that I came up from community college with seventy-two units of transferable work, I still had to take psychology. Nobody had ever said to me that I must take psychology . I took a Krueger Preference Test, where you stuck a needle in a piece of paper to figure out what you really wanted to be, and my test came back saying that I should either be a ship captain or a gardener. The counselor looked at my test for a long time and said, "Have you ever thought about going into business education?" And I said, "No, I haven't." And he said, "Well, business education is a real growing field."

So I had to do a lot of catching up but I knew exactly what I wanted to do, and I was on something of a time schedule, both because of my own plans and I had that sense of needing to get through quickly because my parents were supporting me. I didn't really have time at that point to kind of slob around. So I took a fairly heavy load and got caught up. There were some real doubts the first semester but once I got through that, then I knew that I could make it. The surprise was that the longer that I went on at the university the more I enjoyed it and the better I got at it.

I found it much easier to talk to teachers at the community college. I went to the university, and to give you an example, I took an excellent course--marvelous lectures, and I had to do a series of papers for the class. The first one I did was really good work I thought. I got it back and it had C on the top. I finally determined that somehow it was not fair and that I would go see the TA about this and went down and waited. His office hours were from 4:00 to 5:00 on Tuesdays. A whole line of people waiting. Each of us filed in and I was trembling when I entered. Somehow I got the sense that an injustice had been done because there was nothing on the paper, just said C. I said, "I would like to talk to you about this paper," and he said, "What do you want, an A? I'll make it an A." I said, "I just want to find out what I did wrong." He said, "You didn't do anything wrong. I just got tired of reading them and I figured that if it was worthwhile people would come and see me."

I recall a little English class that I took there. One of the students explained that she was going to be off on a trip, a singing trip, and the professor said, "Oh?" She said, "Yes, I sing with the University chorus." And he said, "Really?" with kind of disdain in his voice,"Graduate students in English at the university don't have time for things like chorus. And in your case you really don't have time for it." My thought at the time was, God, this really made me feel better somehow, because it was really a tough place and the elite couldn't make it through. My friend left graduate school and my response at the time was, somehow this made the whole thing for me that much more valuable because I was able to survive. It must be the same sense of watching people wash out of flight school, and the recruits that can't make it, and it makes you feel that much better and tougher because you have. It was not just graduate students. Women graduate students, in particular, had better tend to business.

I had this thing in my mind that I wanted to go into community college teaching and I knew that that required an M.A. I always had this sense in the first year in particular; a kind of rushing to keep up and not being somehow worthy of it, but at the same time very much intrigued by the whole thing. Then when Louise moved up at the end of my junior year you might say my motivation became even stronger. We got married in September and that changed me. I became instantly older, more responsible, and a working man, and went through a series of jobs. The longer I was at the university, the more I learned, without any sudden great insight, that there was a lot of game-playing involved, the more I learned to relax with what I knew and to feel comfortable with what I knew and use that as a foundation. But at first it was fairly frightening to me that this was what I had chosen to go into--the study of literature--and I was not at all sure that I would ever understand. The whole thing seemed to me to be very much a matter of watching, of finding hidden meaning, that you had to be really sharp and bright. I finished, and got my M.A. in a semester and a half, and the next semester got my teaching credentials, came here, and student taught.

At the time it was very fashionable to make snide remarks about taking the education classes, and some of them were horrible. But that was an important transition for me. It really helped me to refocus myself. I knew somewhat what to expect, but I learned an incredible amount in the student teaching, about teaching and about relationships, colleagues, and about potentials. I always thought that I had probably a much better sense of what to expect in the community college classroom because I had been there. I had ridden the bus for two years with people like Johnny and Eddie, and people that I had known and had grown up with. I knew the kinds of problems and the whole range of attitudes and desires and plans, having lived through that myself. I was intellectually prepared but emotionally, spiritually, physically it came as a great shock when I was thrust into it. I did a freshman composition course, and we did things like Robert Frost and Forster, Passage to India, encouraged in all of this by my master teacher who later confided to me, "Well, I figured you could learn as much from failure as from success," and discovered something I should have known before. I was thinking about my experience in the college as my alternative national service. Actually my career did start there. It was an incredible era. The spring of 1962 when I was completing my student teaching there was a sense of being under siege. My career is inseparable from, I think, all of those political concerns.

One of the most gratifying things happened to me years later after that initial student teaching. We stopped at a supermarket and this guy says, "Do you remember me?" and I said, "Yes," and I didn't remember. He said, "I took a class with you and you did a thing on the book A Passage to India, and I have always remembered that book." We must have talked for five minutes. Here was somebody that I had touched and had some impact on.

It was the spring of '62. I had been interviewing for jobs all over California. Had one where the interviewer fell asleep right when we were talking. Things were looking very bleak. I got a call from the placement center and they said that they had no word on any job yet in the community college, "But we have an opening at the high school, would you be interested in going to the high school?" And I said, "Yeah, I might be" and told Louise when she got back from work. She said, "I have worked to get you through school and I do not intend to have done all of that so that the only job you will be able to get is at the high school. It just is not what it was all about." As it turned out, everything worked out well. I got out at the time of enormous growth in community college education. The year I came to this community college there were seven of us who were hired in English alone.

I remember when I first arrived at my first community college job. It must have been about ten o'clock. It was dark. And all of a sudden I saw these headlights shining through the door, the window of my office, and it was unusual since it was not around any parking lot. I looked out and there was a jeep that had pulled up, and on the lawn and the headlights were on high. I opened the door and this guy said, "Can I help you?" And I said my name and that I was the new teacher here. And he said, "I am the maintenance man in charge of security," and I noticed that he had a large 45 strapped to his waist. I asked him later why he had a 45. It was a little college--a small town--and he said, "I always am armed in case they show up."

I was totally flustered and ill-prepared, didn't know what the hell I was doing. I had two English classes, two remedial classes, and two classes of sub-bone-head English. Those were probably the most challenging of all. I simply was at a loss as to know what to do. I started at 8 o'clock and I went straight through and I had one brief break for lunch. I must have reconsidered a dozen times and wondered if I had made the right decision to go into community college teaching. It was frightening to stand up, in class after class, knowing that I had total responsibility for what happened, what went on in the class, the quality of their responses. I can remember worrying about what the hell to do. I had been thinking in terms of this kind of luxurious approach to writing by simply giving lots of writing assignments and reading them closely and poring over them. There was no way that I could do that with six composition classes. This older woman , a little chubby woman with a house dress on, came up to me and said, "I just want to tell you that I know that I am going to enjoy the class. The Lord came to me himself in a vision last night and told me to take this class from you." She was in training to be a missionary.

My night class the second semester was a writing class and one of the guys was a good old gentlemen in his seventies, almost totally deaf. He sat in the front row the entire time. I gave the first assignment the next class meeting, and the next week he came back and said, "I didn't bring my writing, teacher. What are you going to do?" What do you do to a seventy-year-old man? I really did feel that I was being thrown in cold. Even student teaching, as good as that experience had been for me, didn't prepare me for it. Everything came as such a shock. I have often thought that it is no wonder that those first two years are critical. That is when a lot of people leave the profession. Sometimes they don't belong and sometimes I think it is a loss. If somebody had simply said to them, "There is a tremendous problem of management, of finding enough time, and there is nothing esoteric about it. It is just going to be the kinds of problems that are common to any job: how to get along on a limited amount of money, what to do about faculty relations."

I have always been bothered by the problem with the dropout--quote unquote--the kid who just simply disappears. It is an institutional problem, particularly at the community colleges. It is true that I have seen a lot of those kids come back in subsequent years but I don't know how many countless faces are just lost in the mist. One kid sits in the back of the room for a month and then you don't see him anymore and you wonder, what did I do for him or would it have been better if he had had somebody else.

In another class there was a Chicano who was about seventy-eight percent blind. He was a veteran and he had been hurt in an explosion while in the service and he was back on the VA. He had figured out with very little counseling that what he was going to do with the rest of his life, since he was in bad shape, was to work around cattle and we had an agriculture department. This guy had decided that he couldn't get a job under the circumstances unless he had a degree from a community college and they wouldn't let him in the classes until he had taken an English class and he showed up in my class. It was extremely difficult for him. One of the other teachers who was also a counselor asked me how he was doing in class. I sought this counselor out so that I could get help, you know, at least a tutor for the guy, and the counselor said, "Look, he is not going to be around for long and it would be easier and kinder to him if you did it now." They wanted to throw the guy out--they had no intention of letting him into the Ag program, and they didn't want him around.

That kind of stuff really offended me, it really got to me. There was a lot of paternalism on the part of the administrators and it really bothered me. In part my political activities grew out of that anger. The outcome was they had my name printed in the first page of the newspaper as one of the trouble makers at the college who was trying to start a union. I discovered that for me teaching literature was an excellent form of restoring myself and that I could take an extraordinary heavy work load in writing and just with a single lit class re-energize myself. The second year that I was there I set up the Shakespeare class. My first lit class had been a course in Masterpieces of Western Literature.

[Then I moved to this college.] 1964--a lot of excitement,things were just beginning to pop over. There was always this sense of exciting things that were going on. A lot of it had to do with the tremendous influx of new people hired, most of whom stayed. There was a lot of turmoil in the department. Differing points of view were fought out. English department meetings used to be extremely exciting because people took it all very seriously. To go from a standard load of six classes to four classes--tremendous change. We would stay until late at night having planning sessions. People would voluntarily put the time in. The first semester that I was here there was an organization to promote the open door policy throughout the California community colleges. This was nothing more than just a kind of idealistic lobbying group to enlighten the world. We all shared a common office together and that was an important way of keeping those currents going. It was a very exciting time to be here. It was so different in the diverse kinds of people ; there were always a lot of different focuses. It was a time when the students were not fully up to the level of our enthusiasm and idealism ; that was later, that was to come in the late sixties. In those days I was bothered by the smug provincialism. I used to, in the early phase of civil rights, refer to my students as "gentle bigots"; they were racist but they would never use bad words. They were polite about it.

I think that just the physical layout of offices on this campus, like so many college campuses, is an indication of the kind of isolation that most teachers fall into whether they want to or not. When I came here I am sure there were teachers who were isolated but I was really not aware of it. There was far less opportunity for isolation from each other, administrators, even from members of the governing board. We lost some things unfortunately when we lost our old gang group offices and were moved into these beautiful--I refer to them as dentist offices--all we need is the music in the background, each of us having our own little cell in which to do our thing.

As far as I am concerned, the most positive change in the community of college students has been the proportion of older students, particularly women, and now we are getting a lot of men as well. In my classes it has really been gratifying. I have always enjoyed teaching people who have a lot more in the way of experience and also have common kinds of problems with confidence: will they be able to do it? Will they be able to keep up with it? I seem to be able to do well with those kinds of people. I am good at confidence building.

Some years ago there were radical changes in the California teacher credential law. A bill had just come in that everybody had to have a teaching credential. In the 40's there were whole areas where it was impossible to get a teacher, and a lot of women, in particular women, who had had some college training, had gone into teaching and they were close to retirement. They were being faced with a deadline for the state that said that either you get a teaching credential or as of this date you will no longer be employed. So they went to the state college where they could get a degree in Education and a teaching credential. Well, many state colleges would not let them in unless they had passed an English proficiency test, and these women totally freaked out. They couldn't pass the test so they couldn't get into this education school and they couldn't get their credentials. These people were desperate and they hired people like me to teach a class. The problem was that they had this test anxiety. And I taught that six-week course with people who were probably more motivated than any other group that I have taught. Part of it was building them up, part of it figuring out the devices and routines so that they are not bothered by the ticking of a clock and wondering if they are ever going to get through. I think I got three-fourths of them through the test. But the people who didn't, who failed, what that did to me! It was a horrible experience.

We had a tremendous sense of upheaval in education at this school, particularly from the late sixties on. Really for us those were the tumultuous times--the anti-Vietnam thing probably more than anything else--although we had a tremendous upheaval as a result of conscientious deliberate recruiting a large group of Black students and we went through our own crisis here on campus. We have a number of people who are involved in either publishing or in research. The teaching comes first. These textbooks are really textbooks that embody what we all worked on. When I finished my poetry textbook and went back over it, I realized how much of that was a setting forth of the things that we had done in common in the department.

I can remember sitting in a class at the height of my nondirective period, sitting in a class and saying, "What shall we do, what shall we do today, what shall we do for the next session, what shall we do for the remainder of the semester?" And waiting for the students to generate something themselves, waiting for the spirit to catch.

But it was also a time for me when I was doing things like organizing Martin Luther King day here, after the King assassination. I had been involved with the summer readiness program, primarily for Black kids. And that was just a disaster because the summer readiness program, if anything, was against getting kids ready for the real rigors that they would face in college. I put together a course on race relations. That was a kind of thing that I could do for a couple of years and finally say no, this is not what I should be doing. It needs to be done but I am not the one to be doing it. And then the anti-war stuff, and the teach-ins and the draft resisters.

My teaching generally during that time I look back on now as not very good but necessary for me to go through, for the profession to go through. There is a lot I learned. I learned that fundamental truth that people learn in different ways at different rates, there have to be different kinds of approaches. There are a lot of things that I have retained: the use of silence, the use of deliberate anxiety as a teaching device. People learn most, best, what they discover for themselves. I have become a lot more directive and lot more insistent that there are certain things to be learned and learned in a particular way. But I still retain a lot of that flavor from the old days. I think it is essential. For instance, now when I teach a creative writing class a lot of the students who sign up for creative writing are flabbergasted when they discover that I have a whole agenda in mind, and I ask them to do things like write in a certain format rather than sitting around stroking each other's ego and waiting for me to tell them they are publishable.

I have in the last three or four years, as outside demands have grown, turned to the TAs, and that is something that when I came here sixteen years ago I would never have done. It was a point of honor, you did all of your own reading. In 1972 things began to change and faculty were not as close as the campus got much larger, and what went on outside your department was not as important to you. We still maintain some of the old rituals but they are kind of pale reflections of what went on when we first came. Increasingly our social life has moved away from the college. Now the connections that I have with my colleagues outside of my immediate area are tending to be political things, involvement in union activity and economic issues, and they have taken precedence over educational issues. When I came here we used to have serious discussions about the philosophy of the school. Now if somebody were to try and have a serious debate about the philosophy of the school, they would be laughed at, laughed at out loud, and people would just dismiss it out of hand--it is the thing you put in the catalog and it is gone.

The average age now of this faculty is fifty, and I think back to what it was when I came here. Fifty years old-- that is incredible. Fortunately for me there is still the sense of excitement and discovery in trying new things. In a society where the great majority of people have jobs that they do because they have to, I have the great good fortune to be doing something that I really and truly enjoy. I can have a particularly good class--and Shakespeare does it inevitably--and come out of it feeling refreshed. Shakespeare is guaranteed to make me feel much better, give me a kind of lift, and carry me through the next bunch of madness.

I have always been deeply involved in campus politics and in the running of things, and increasingly over the years I have seen myself less and less as a potential administrator. The salary is enough, with the extra classes we have been allowed to teach, so I make almost as much as a low level administrator would make, and most of the administrative jobs that I look at are dead end. If I am fortunate and if I understand how to manipulate the system, use the power and gain the necessary support of the political processes, that is again an experience that not many people in our society have. When Proposition 13 passed, the institutions were caught short; no amount of planning could prepare for what happened. As teachers we were not hard hit. A lot more happened to the classified staff and the administration than happened to the faculty. Nevertheless it was unnerving and morale was badly affected.

The cost of living is high here, a lot of salaries are high. But more important there is the sense of independence here, a sense of being where decisions are being made, rightfully or wrongly. Increasingly, though, we see our independence being taken away because of the increased influence of the state. They who pay the money make the decisions. But nevertheless we will hold onto it as long as we can. I keep coming back to this thing. I thought of education as being a marvelously rewarding experience for a small elite, the Happy Band, the people who didn't really like high school and who wanted to get out of small towns and who were very very bright and very very clever. And what I found is, there is so much more. Different kinds of people, so many kinds of rewarding experiences that I have had, and moments of small triumphs. There was a brain-damaged guy I had years ago in a class, we don't call it remedial, a developmental writing class. He had real problems and I worked with him. One of the assignments was I gave them a piece of popcorn and said that you have to write about this piece of popcorn for half an hour. There was an older woman and she said, "You will never know what that did for that guy. It blew his mind and when he wrote it, when he completed it and you praised him for it,it really made him feel good." Within my limitations, and with the limitations of the students that I have, I make no bones about it, I am a popularizer. I am someone who opens up, who shows the way, that is my job. I am a teacher.

Just a community college--just a community college--it is a very different kind of a place from the university. We do things here that the university would never do. We had a bunch of really bright kids who got into computer programming and doing their own programming and they were very good. There was a computer programming association--they hold an annual competition. And our team, our bunch of guys, defeated three universities. On the other hand my experiences over the years of seeing students who came to this community college by third choice who couldn't get into the state college and their grades were not good enough for the university so they had to come to the community college--a lot of those people go through the same kind of syndrome; they don't want to be here so consequently everything that happens is negative, and they end up spending all of their time in the cafeteria. And after a while they are not there anymore, we don't see them around anymore.

For myself, well, for myself the educational issues particularly in the last three or four years have been put on the back burner. I am very much interested in the program for returning women. For years we have had a reentry program here of returning women. First of all it is the tension that it introduces into the classroom a different order of values. These are people who are in college very much because they choose to be, not because of some ill-defined social pressure. Seeing them deal with, say, an eighteen-year-old kid who is only interested in his lowered Chevy, out of that come some marvelous kinds of cross-fertilization. One of the women confronted the kids in the class, said, "I really don't like the way you in discussions automatically want me in the same category as the instructor, just because I am older. I share concerns with you people." And they said, "That is exactly why we do, because you have always referred to us as 'you people.' " I have had classes where there have been two or three older women, and the class starts out with a lot of "Oh, do we have to do that kind of stuff?" and there is an "I want to do that," a "let's do that, let's do more of that," that has a very infectious quality to it. You find a lot of students who are just slogging their way through suddenly get very motivated because there are three people in the class who are highly motivated, for whom every minute counts. They really want things to take shape for them.

I am getting damn tired of pronouncements coming out about the decline of literacy and how badly today's students are faring, measured in a very narrow way. Every time I see one of those damn things I think of that test that those poor women were put through in the summer of 1963. As a whole the students that I see are writing as well as and generally better than the students that I saw when I started teaching here. There are ongoing mechanical problems that they have in their writing, but what they say is much more interesting, much more fun to read, than it was twelve to fifteen years ago. I find it very difficult to bring together these public pronouncements about the decline of literacy with my own experience.

Increasingly there are students who don't take the Associate of Arts Degree. They just take what they need and go on to a four-year institution. But wherever we can, we try to influence the student to include courses like literature, humanities. That is, I suppose, being at the barricades, trying to hold on to that tradition. One of the things that I would like to do on a sabbatical is to go back to the university to just take Elizabethan studies for a semester, or for a year. I pride myself in that I have had people who have gone on as English majors; in fact, I have one student who is over at State now, who is taking Shakespeare.

The worst thing about the job is papers--reading papers when I really failed to ignite and excite. The dreary drudgery of going through a stack of papers in which there is no redeeming quality whatsoever. I have never come up with, for me, a comfortable totally satisfactory way to handle grades. I just don't like it. I encourage my students to take a course on a credit, no credit, or pass/fail basis.

I swear to you--this is my sixteenth year--I feel as much excitement about this coming week, I suppose in my own subdued middle-aged way--I feel as much excitement as I did when I first started here. It is always something new that is happening or something new that is involving me--or some new thing that I am going to try, that is going to be the answer to everything. We will finally solve Freshman Composition after all. There always is some kind of new excitement, some new approach that people are talking about and people are using, that people are sharing with each other.

Profile

JANET INGERSOLL

(Janet Ingersoll, a doctoral candidate in her early thirties, had taught part-time at a California suburban community college. She was interviewed at her home in the summer of 1981.)

I am a real California kid. I was born in Berkeley and grew up until I was ten in Los Angeles and then my parents moved to a suburb . I went to public schools from kindergarten through high school. I went to a high school that was pretty much in a blue-collar neighborhood. I think one third of my graduating class went on to college and, of those, fifty percent went to community colleges. I had kind of bad feelings about community colleges at that point, the stereotype being a high school with ash trays . At that point I didn't think that I wanted to go to college. Neither one of my parents were particularly committed to making me go. My aunt decided that I really was going to want to go to college and she applied to college for me. So she got me in.

The spring of '68 I started college. I got very active in student government. I was on the staff at the experimental college which was a student-run organization that sponsored classes on campus--you didn't get any credit for them-- things like yoga and health-food cooking. Then the strike came and I lived through that on the picket line. And then became disillusioned with school and had managed to save some money and was thinking of going to Europe . I went to school in Wales for a year, rather than dropping out of school, and then came back and finished my bachelor's degree. Then I worked at the university as a receptionist in the financial aid office for a year which was the only job I could find. I became disillusioned with that too, and had a friend who encouraged me to go back to graduate school. My father thought that I was crazy, he thought I had a perfectly good job that paid decent money and I should stick that out. My father dropped out of high school because he got bored with it and his mother let him do it. He was driving a truck most of the time I was growing up and ended up having a couple of bad accidents which debilitated him and so my mother went back to work at a bank where she still works.

I went to one of those old old elementary schools. It was about four stories high and for some reason they started the first graders on the third floor. I remember going up flights of stairs to get there. I remember in maybe the third or fourth grade I would be able to get out of the classroom a lot to go and be the librarian and collect the fines. I remember in sixth grade being in the high reading group . I remember about junior high having a teacher who was so thrilled that somebody liked Spanish. And having a female math teacher which seemed sort of odd to me at the time. I was never pushed to get A's or rewarded for getting them. As long as I didn't have a particularly bad report card I wasn't in trouble. A C was perfectly all right.

High school was an experience. My parents moved out of the city because they were getting intimidated by the number of Black people who were moving in. But so did a lot of Chicano people and so my high school was probably half Chicano and half white. There were real clear divisions in every way; white students were the ones who did well in school. Or if they didn't they were sort of embarrassed that they didn't, and the Chicanos were the ones who didn't care and picked fights and caused problems. The year I was a freshman in high school was the year John Kennedy was assassinated.

My group of friends in high school were the sort of avant-garde group who discovered the whole hippie movement before anybody else did. Two friends from that group ended up getting married in the park. We all carried daisies and the minister showed up with shoulder-length hair and a beard. About my junior year I decided I would compete with a friend of mine who had a photographic memory and did very well in all of her classes and so I raised my grades phenomenally by doing that. There were certain things that I got very interested in. In the social studies classes if you did well, you got to be an honor student which meant you got to go to the library instead of study hall and put together term papers instead of taking tests and I had a great time doing that. I really enjoyed it and I've still got those term papers. That social science teacher was from Kentucky and very very conservative. Very short crew cut, very much a Republican, but a very kind man, nonetheless. He would give me A's on these papers with a comment something like, "This leaves a few viewpoints out," meaning his. I would listen to Pacifica Radio and my mother would make me turn it off, because she thought it was crazy radical stuff I had no business listening to.

I had an uncle who was some sort of vice president with a bank and managed to get a job for me there. I think there were fifteen of us who were file clerks, all of us women, and young. My job was to take a grocery cart up and down an eleven-story building delivering files. Our boss was inclined to come to the file room to lecture all of those young women on morals. I finally decided to do a little sabotage. When my least favorite corporation would have a piece of paper that I was supposed to file, I would put it through the shredder. Then my acceptance to college came through and I thought, my God, an escape.

I went into college with the attitude most people had in the sixties: there was an awful lot that I wanted to know about the world and I wasn't particularly interested in a degree. I wanted the freedom to be able to find out those things and to be able to do what I wanted to do with my life. At home there was nobody to talk to about what I was interested in, because nobody else was interested, my sister was too young and my parents weren't interested. They had problems of their own and mouths to feed and arguments to have between themselves. They started to think I was peculiar then.

The state college was a very heterogeneous place. There were lots of minority students, lots of students who in fact were the first generation in their family to go to college, and students whose parents had gone to college as well. I was at the state college for a year and a half before things became pretty hairy and then that fall was when the strike began. Before that there had been a sit-in but it was building up to the strike. Those of us who were in student government were all very much in sympathy with the Black Studies Program so that we had intended to go on strike anyway. All of our offices and funding and everything were immediately taken away from us. All sorts of wild things started happening. A friend of mine happened to be walking out of the library when the police were charging the steps and he got hit in the back of the head with a baton and ended up in the hospital with stitches. I was in a picket line that was charged by a bunch of policemen on horses. I became very angry and stayed that way throughout most of that experience. People's spirits were very low and at that point I decided that I'd really had it with school. All of us became really disillusioned and kind of depressed and I think that happened to the faculty as well. They saw an awful lot of fellow faculty members lose their jobs and the school was just not the same anymore.

I decided to quit school for awhile and go to Europe. I applied to the International Programs at State and ended up at the University College of North Wales. I was the first person in my family to have gone to Europe. I was very homesick and disoriented for the first couple of months. I remember paying fifty dollars a month rent for a room and eating as inexpensively as I could and not going out. I had spent the summer before I went being a long-distance telephone operator, socking away as much money as I could. I had a wonderful year. I studied very hard and sat fifteen hours of exams and even enjoyed that and did pretty well. Then I came back and had one semester left and finished my degree. A friend said, "You need time to think; go to graduate school." I thought, all right, why not, and applied to go the following fall.

I ended up being a counselor at State. I was the only student who was doing that. Then I got involved in learning how to teach composition. Those of us who went through that program and did fairly well could apply for a two-year part-time position teaching junior level and freshman composition. I did that and was hired and there was a corps of us doing that who were all graduate students and liked each other enormously. I did write a thesis, did a lot of work in nineteenth century British lit and women's studies. That was the point at which the women's studies movement had taken off as well. I taught some women's literature courses. There was an awful lot going on again and I seemed to be right in the middle of it.

Suddenly I really did have a career. I knew how to teach writing, which was something that was in demand, and I had teaching experience and I could go out and find myself a job. I liked school. I liked being a student, I like that environment. And probably a year into graduate school I knew that I was going to try to do something that would keep me in a place like that.

It took me awhile to adjust to teaching. The first few teaching experiences I had I was just terrified to be standing in front of a classroom and totally unwilling to imagine that anything I had to say was worth thirty people listening to. It was really rough going the first semester. The first semester I taught at State which was the first time I really had a class of my own and was being paid for it was a pretty awful experience. I really thought about it and decided that if I was falling off the horse, I had to get right back on again. And I decided that I just simply had to have more confidence and then it went much much better. And from that point on, I have continued to enjoy teaching more and more each year. At State you end up with a lot of very belligerent angry students who think they write just fine and nobody has ever told them otherwise. In addition there are a number of students who are second-language students, lots of Asian students. It wasn't a matter of getting your feet wet, it was a matter of getting in up to your neck immediately.

So I was doing graduate work at State and had gotten involved in a program that taught graduate students in English how to teach writing. In the midst of that it was also suggested to me that I enroll in a nine-unit program in teaching, student teaching in the community college. So I went down to the community college and was told that the man I ended up working with was a very good teacher and might work with me. I got in touch with him. So my first exposure to the community college was to watch somebody teach there and then to teach a class myself the following semester. And it was something that I liked quite a bit. I enjoyed teaching much to my surprise. I was at State as a part-time composition instructor and that same fall I was offered a couple of classes at the community college on a part-time basis.

My supervising teacher decided that I was the best student teacher he had and was really interested in trying to keep me around. That's what led to my staying at the community college. The first semester I taught for pay I taught two night classes and drove down to the community college two nights a week. So I was really in the peripheral faculty, I was not there during the day. The night-time students were considerably different from the daytime. Many of them are re-entry students or people who work in the business community during the day and are trying to finish a degree by going to school at night, so it is a much older population. And that makes for different teaching, too. Then I was at the college on a full-time basis for a year teaching exclusively day classes. And that was when the teaching started getting a little rough. I ended up with whatever class the regular faculty didn't want to teach. What was left were remedial composition classes. Then I didn't have any remedial classes, but I had four freshman comp, so I was repeating myself four times a week saying the same thing. Then at the end of that year I went back to teaching part-time for another two years. I ended up teaching there for five years altogether .

Only one full-time year, the rest of it was part-time teaching, which amounted almost to a full-time load. The part-time teachers could teach nine units and a full-time load would be twelve. So it is just one class short of a full-time load for considerably less pay. As a part-timer you are paid on an hourly basis and you are paid only for the time you are standing in front of the classroom. The pay for full-timers is quite reasonable, in fact on the whole it's more than most people get paid who are teaching at the university. But the pay for part-timers is much worse. The part-timers weren't even asked to turn in requests of what they would like to teach. You were simply given what was left, and you were told. And then there was even somewhat of a hierarchy there. Those of us who were around the longest were asked first. You know, here are the fifteen courses that are left, which ones do you want, and then the people who were hired last were the ones who got what was left and they took it if they wanted it and otherwise they didn't.

The first few years I was teaching both at State and at the community college, so I would drive back and forth between the two and usually teach five writing classes altogether. It was seventeen hours in the car driving a week. And I had two briefcases--one for the community college and one for the university. I had to make sure that I grabbed the right one when I ran out the door in the morning.

There is this hierarchy in terms of the teaching load in higher education. If you are in the community college, you're tremendously burdened, you are burdened almost as much as a high school teacher is. The college had it worked out so that if you taught composition exclusively and no literature classes, you

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taught four classes a semester. If you included literature in your load you had to teach five, so you teach three writing courses and two literature courses. To get students to write well, you have to make a writing assignment at least every week and a half and ideally every week. And that means you work all weekend and you work in the evenings or, as many of my colleagues have done--and I can't blame them for doing it at all-- you cut corners.

The paper grading process: it's important at the beginning of a writing course and I think I do a pretty conscientious job grading students' papers. It's a little bit discouraging to start out a semester anticipating that you are going to be doing that for four classes and that you are going to get a fat set of a hundred essays and often more than that, that you are going to have to spend all of your weekend and most of the nights for the next week and a half grading. It sets up the kind of situation that you begin at least a little bit to resent the papers which is not healthy, because then that resentment I think is transferred a little bit to the students too. And at the community college there is a very very high attrition rate, but there is no way to guess who's going to be dropping out of the classes. So for the first few writing assignments you're going to end up with many more papers to grade then you will have students at the end, and so you spend a lot of time and energy on those papers and then the students just simply disappear.

It gave me a certain amount of credibility at the community college to be teaching at State; here was somebody who was actually teaching at a four-year college. When I started facing the possibility that I could get on full time at the community college, I began to think, well, I don't know, I like to teach, I like to teach an awful lot, but I'm not sure I want to teach here. If in fact I liked to teach, but I didn't want to be teaching necessarily with that tremendous teaching burden each semester,maybe I should go on and get a Ph.D. and get a teaching job at a four-year college as opposed to a two-year college.

This community college really serves an upper middle class suburban community and many of my students' parents were not college educated but were determined that their children would go to college. And lots of the students didn't want to go, and from what I could tell from talking to them, had struck up bargains with Mom and Dad somewhere along the line: "So, Johnny, if you will just go to the local community college, we will give you a car and you can have an allowance and you can do what you want on the weekends, just see if you like it." And so many of them wisely chose to do that rather than getting a job with McDonald's or pumping gas, and came to the college not very interested in being there and certainly not very determined to work. Many of them ended up in remedial English classes which didn't please them very much, particularly since if you were placed in the lowest remedial course that meant you had four English classes ahead of you which they found very frustrating on the whole. And those were the kinds of students I was teaching. Many of the vocational programs require a certain number of units in English in order to get the degree. Many of them were going for the AA degree, and so they are really there to become welders or aeronautic engineers or beauticians or graphic designers and they are in English classes. They are not there necessarily to be in college, they are there to be in a training program.

I became determined to win them over. I spent a lot of time figuring out for the remedial students what they were interested in and consequently what magazines might interest them, because it was a matter of getting them to read as well as to write because often their writing problems grew out of the fact that they weren't reading either. And hadn't been reading for years. I tried to make the classroom situation as informal as possible without making it totally unstructured. I got them to work a lot with each other in groups. I had to figure out how to keep their attention. So we would get into small groups and then I would teach for twenty minutes and then I get them back into a large group and they all face me and I get them to pay attention to something that I want to tell them and I write on the board in more or less lecture form for fifteen minutes and then we spend another ten minutes getting something else. So I did a lot of fast footwork around the classroom to keep them interested in what was going on. The students are quite capable of making paper airplanes and throwing them around the room and it is about as close, from what I can tell, to high school teaching as you can get on the college level.

I tried to be as much of a friend as I was a teacher. Not that I wanted to be intimately involved in every facet of their life, but I wanted to make it clear to them that I was certainly available to talk to outside of class. I ended up being chastised by my first office-mate for doing that. She was a woman about to retire who had spent years teaching out of the old school which is that you're a professional, you go in and do your job and leave the classroom , you talk to students exclusively about the material they are learning in your class and you don't interact with them in any other way. One student was particularly upset one day because she had a horrible fight with her parents and really needed just to talk. I was certainly not trying to guide her personal life. My office-mate told me that I just simply could not interact with my students that way, that I was to be a professional and I was to maintain a distance and I don't think I ever did that. And I don't regret it, I don't think it interfered with the learning process. The eighteen-year-olds who were right out of high school, many of them really didn't know what they were doing and were floundering and really needed to talk about it. Usually there were students in my office during my office hours, talking to me either about the class work or what they were thinking about doing in the future and did I have any suggestions about what four-year college might be a good one to go to? I also had the advantage of being one of the youngest faculty members. The majority of the faculty is the age of the students' parents and maybe even a little bit older, so there is that age gap and that was not true for me. I think that set up a different dynamic. If you go to a community college you are going to end up in much smaller classes. You get more personal attention, but faculty on the whole don't spend an awful lot of time interacting with the students outside of the classroom. Part of that is the way the students treat their own education, which is that many of them work more than half time, come to school simply to go to class, and then take off and go to work.

It is frustrating, it is very frustrating. Probably the most frustrating attrition problem occurs in evening college. And that's because you usually know why someone is dropping out of class. They are usually pretty conscientious about coming and telling you why they are dropping out. Day school it is frustrating only in that you spent an hour and a half of your precious time grading somebody's first three essays and then they just disappear. It's probably because they decided to take on an extra five hours of work in their part-time job, then have to let go of a class and English is the least interesting to them and so that's what goes. At night students often over-commit themselves unintencionally and then get very strung out and have to quit and feel frustrated about that. You feel frustrated about it and there is nothing you can do. Somebody has a kid who gets sick and has been sick for two weeks and that person has been trying to go to work and take care of the kid and go to school and it's somebody who's been a particularly promising student usually, who's been doing very well and has been really improving and you have high hopes for that student being the best student at the end of the semester. And then half way through this minor tragedy occurs and the student has to drop out.

In your evening classes you start out with thirty and end up with seventeen. And it is hard on the students as well because our numbers shrink as the weeks go by and it is demoralizing to them too. So you are constantly dealing with a classroom whose dynamics are changing just among the students and you're having to kind of be the buffer for that and fill in and it is hard. It is very hard. Although at the end all of us usually feel pretty good, those of us who have made it through, because they're finished and they are getting their credit and they can go on the next semester to another class. The day-time attrition rate makes me more angry, because it often is students who could in fact stick it out if they were dedicated and interested.

The first remedial class that I taught was made up of students who have never quite made it beyond freshman English in high school and many of them told me they took the same course over for four years in a row. I went into that first class with high hopes and my class was going to be different from everybody else's. It was going to be Mr. Chips and they were going to make remarkable progress and be very enthusiastic about what they were doing. I spent hours figuring out these innovative ways to teach spelling and vocabulary and sentence structure and to get them to read and be interested in what they were reading. On the whole it was a fairly successful class. One particular day one student raised his hand and said, in the middle of a lesson on something entirely different, "Do we really have to take English after this class?" And I interrupted the lesson and explained, yes, that was the case. Somebody else said, "That's just not fair, that we have to take another English class, it's just not fair." And then a third person said, "Well, you want to know what happened to me?" and then all of a sudden they were telling these stories about what had happened to them and how they had been trapped into this class and how they really didn't want to be there. One guy who had just gotten out of the Marines and was a very angry young man said, "English isn't everything, you know." And I suddenly felt like the school marm who thought there was nothing more important than reading books and writing essays. I finished teaching that class and went back to my office and turned to my office-mate to try to explain to her what had happened and burst into tears. It was such a frustrating experience and that was an extreme case of what often had a tendency to go on in those remedial classes.

On the other hand the first eight o'clock class I ever taught was a class that turned out to be full of students who were just lovely. They were very interested in learning how to write better and even ones who were vocational students said that they felt the class had helped an awful lot. At the end of the semester they all got together and bought me a new shiny fancy thermos and presented it to me with a big card . That was a nice experience.

I was a little bit naive when I started teaching there. I grew up in a blue-collar neighborhood where very few of the people I went to high school with went on to college and nobody in my family had ever been to college before. I came out of that experience feeling that education was very very important and that it was really a gift when it was given to you and it was something that could change your life, maybe not necessarily monetarily but it could in a lot of other ways, and that if you were going to go to college it was worth your while to work hard and learn something. And I went to the community college with all of those things in mind, even though it was a richer county than the one that I grew up in. I went down there intending to teach good classes and assuming that they would work reasonably hard and that they would be fairly dedicated and that they would appreciate the education they were getting. And discovered much to my dismay that for many students that was not the case at all. I made an assignment at State and gave a due date and all of the essays would be there. And I do that at the community college and I would have a class of twenty-five and I would get fifteen essays. I faced a lot of problems I don't think I ever resolved. And became very discouraged with the ones who weren't willing to work and who weren't particularly appreciative of where they were. In fact, I think they considered it as much of a sentence as they considered high school.

Plus you are in a funny bind . You get a very distinct double message from the administration. On the one hand you are told that you are to keep up the academic reputation of the community college and to really bear in mind that many of these students are going to transfer to four-year colleges. The classes they took at the community college should be comparable to the classes they would have taken at the four-year college. On the other hand you are told, "We stay in business having full classes. So there shouldn't be a high attrition rate, keep students in the classroom." Well, one of the most effective ways to keep students in the classroom is not to work them too hard. I never made that choice, but it was a clear choice.

I don't mean to sound totally negative. There were some very good and positive things about being at the community college, but I found it very frustrating as a teacher because of what I felt my responsibility was and what I really wanted to be doing in the classroom. I like to teach an awful lot, but I'm not sure I want to teach here. I'm not sure I want to become eccentric or frazzled, you know. Certain kinds of eccentricity are nice, but the kinds I see look more like people in pain than enjoying it. If that was the case, if in fact I liked to teach, but I didn't want to be teaching necessarily with that tremendous teaching burden each semester, maybe I should go on and get a Ph.D. and get a teaching job at a four-year college as opposed to a two-year college. I applied to a number of Ph.D. programs in English,and also to a program in the School of Education at the university. And in fact began in the School of Education and did that program for a quarter mostly to see what it was all about, and then decided I didn't want to do it.

Most of the people who went through that program ended up doing administrative work, curriculum planning. One of the things that motivated me was that I had a lot of ideas of how to design the community college so that it was more effectively serving students and how to make the teaching more palatable for the people who were doing it. But the program I got into was dominated by elementary school teachers and was supposed to be a program in reading and language development but the focus was really on elementary school. It was material that just seemed not particularly relevant to me and so I ended up deciding not to do it.

I spent the last few semesters at the community college working in the writing center. One of the writing center's main tasks was to outreach to the vocational programs on campus. I worked with a lot of vocational students. They often knew that in order to really get anywhere in the profession they were training themselves to be part of, they had to improve their writing; but they were very scared of going up the hill where the humanities classroom is and actually taking English classes. They march out of the vocational building and up the hill assuming that they are going to fail yet once again. What we did instead was to go down into their territory and to work with them in their territory. And the welding instructor was more than willing to say to his students, "If you can write, if you can write up a report, if you can write up a program or a design for a particular welding project, you're going to end up being a supervisor, maybe running your own company; if you can't do that, you are going to get stuck being a welder and it's going to make a crucial difference." Some of them made really quite remarkable improvement and they were pretty enthusiastic about what they were doing. And that was very gratifying.

The administration has become very interested in machines. And all that machines can do and how much cheaper they are in fact than faculty members. They have spent a good deal of money recently flying around the country studying schools that have converted to machine teaching in hopes of being able to convince themselves that it is in fact both cost effective and student machine effective. Introductory courses can be put into a machine and students can do a self-paced learning and earn unit credit for doing that. And I have very strong feelings about that. I don't think it works. I don't think it works both because I have watched my students try to use machines and because I have tried to use them as well and there is just not the interaction there is in the classroom. And particularly for students such as the ones who end up often at community colleges who really need someone to sit down with them and say, "This is what you haven't learned and we are going to try and figure out why you haven't learned it and I'm here to answer any questions you have," as opposed to a machine that can only answer a few. The trend seems to be absolutely away from that. They just spent a great deal of money installing new machines and carpeting in their reading center, in hopes that they could probably get rid of the paraprofessional they have eventually and make that all machine controlled. I don't think that's the way to go. And I don't think that's the way to go with writing courses and there seems to be some push for that to happen with writing. I have seen tapes of sentence structure lessons and things like that. Which are cute and charming, most of them, and pretty ineffective from what I can tell. What it creates then is an administrative stance that seems to say, "We don't appreciate very much what you can do in the classroom, you know, we understand you are doing what a good machine can do. But beyond that, we are not so sure that you are doing anything much better." It's often an attempt on the administration's part, I think, to be cost-efficient, at least that's been my experience; they think that if they can plug a certain number of students into a computer and teach them whatever course it may be, Psych 1 or Typing Skills or whatever, then that's one less faculty member they have to pay salary to and health benefits.

Other gestures are made which frustrate me an awful lot. The parole boards have begun sending convicts, even ex-felons, to the community colleges as their parole. So that they are to take twelve units, complete them successfully each semester, and that's the condition of their parole. And that places an added frustration on an already complex situation and also the implication is that any ex-convict with no matter what kind of education he or she has had can certainly make it at a community college. Which means that they don't think that there is an awful lot going on there intellectually, or at least that seems to be the message. In addition to that a lot of the mental health patients are now living in half-way houses in the community. And they are sent to the community colleges as well. And many of them are people who really do not belong in a classroom. They disrupt them, they don't know what they are doing there. They are disoriented. And again the gesture seems to be, well, the community college is a place that will babysit people who can't get along anywhere else in the world. Those are discouraging gestures. I am very much in favor of ex-convicts being rehabilitated and I think that mental health patients need places to go and things to do and they need to go out into the community much more than they have in the past, but tossing them all toward the community college I don't think is the solution to the problem. And it creates more of a problem.

Each semester it looked as if the next semester there was going to be a full-time opening. And I stayed down there in hopes that that would happen. The first couple of years I taught part-time it was fine, I didn't mind that and I didn't want a full-time position; I was also teaching at State. But then it had gotten to the point where I wanted to be making more money, I wanted a better teaching assignment, I didn't want to teach part-time anymore. I hung around for three years hoping that something would come up. And became increasingly more discouraged. Last year I took the fall semester off down there and only did my graduate studies. I finally decided what it was exactly that I wanted to be studying and I was taking some very very good classes. A full-time job came open at the college. And I was really being encouraged to apply, I had been there for four years and had done I guess good teaching for four years and it was clear that I was going to be a very very strong candidate for that job . And I really agonized over it. I spent a month trying to decide really whether I wanted to do that or not. And it was clear to me that if I went on and did the Ph.D. I would have three or four different possibilities for teaching and research and things I was enjoying doing. And I decided I wouldn't apply. And couldn't bear to tell them that I decided I wasn't going to apply.

The community college is pretty good about having full-time female faculty members. It's not fifty-fifty, but at least a third of the full-time faculty are women, so that's not so much an issue as it is at the university where seven percent of the full-time tenured faculty are women.

In the course of getting my master's degree I had written a one-hundred-and-fifty-page thesis, I had gone through a number of graduate courses and completed them successfully, and I was getting a lot more confidence then I had had before. As a result of that more doors started opening, and it became clear to me that I could at least try to get a Ph.D. I started to teach at the university while I was still teaching at the community college --at the community college three days a week and at the university two--and I was teaching--even though they have tremendous writing problems--essentially the cream of the crop. I was teaching the top fifteen percent of the high school students who were coming out of high schools in California. I liked teaching at the university because I could in fact teach and students would in fact be willing to learn and it put the community college in a much worse light than it had been in before. In terms of academics at the university, discovering linguistics and anthropology and liking them very much made me want to stay there. And I was feeling as a young teacher probably a certain amount of creative energy and enthusiasm that I wanted to throw at something and I had to decide which direction I was going to throw it in. I had at the time, and I continue to have, lots of ideas as to what would make that particular community college a better place and what would make the teaching a lot better. And how the administration and faculty ought to be dealing with each other as opposed to the way they are. And I think the choice came down to: was I going to use that energy I had to fight a battle with the community college and hope to make some changes for the better? Or was I going to use it at the university being a graduate student and pursuing a Ph.D.? My final decision was whether I was going to take the job that paid very good money and offered a certain amount of security or whether I was going to risk being a graduate student and living on peanuts for another four years.

For a long time I didn't have any intellectual life there at all because I was coming in the evening and teaching and leaving and that was about it. I had contact with my students, which was fine usually and gratifying but not in the same sort of way as contact with colleagues . There really was a very big difference between what I was experiencing at the community college and what I was experiencing at the university. I was in an office with five other people all of whom were my age and all of them were getting Ph.D.'s and all of them were vitally interested in what they were doing. And also very interested in teaching because they were very new to it. I was finding faculty members I liked a lot who I found I could spend time with.

I felt like the energy I was using , the reward I was getting for it, no matter what clever angle I figured out, the success rate at the community college would be a little bit greater but not all that much greater. The attrition rate would be the same because it invariably is. I felt like I was beating my head against the wall and running in circles and it didn't feel that way with the linguistics and anthropology.

I wanted students to be more interested than they were and I was experiencing something very different at the university with the teaching and in addition to that I was learning something new that I could learn as fast as I wanted to learn it and nobody was stopping me and if I learned it fast and moved on then you know the success, it did feel very good, it was exhilarating. I think it's important that community colleges exist and the students who go there are getting a very very good deal on the whole and maybe it just didn't work out for me. I'm not sure. Because I think I am painting a very bleak picture and I don't mean to be. I fear sometimes that I complain too much about the whole thing, in the sense that I say I found it frustrating. It was very frustrating and the problem was that the students were this way and the administration was that way and my colleagues weren't what they could have been and it sounds as if I am writing the whole thing off. I don't mean to be doing that at all.

The practical part of me was fighting with the other part of me. The creative part of me was saying, "What you are really interested in right now is linguistics and anthropology, the teaching you like best is at the university, money is not really that important in the end." But it felt like a risk, it felt like a real big risk, and that practical part of me kept saying, "You are a fool. You know you are a fool. You are in a perfectly good place, why don't you stay there?"

The woman at the university who is my major professor shot up the tenure ladder faster than anybody in the history of the department. At the community college, the older women were very nice, I liked them very much, we had good relations but they weren't people I necessarily aspired to be. I had an awful lot of encouragement and support from [the community college professor who was my supervising teacher], and in fact, to some extent I think that even if he didn't mean to he was part of what encouraged me to go on and try the Ph.D. He was trying to get me to go to Harvard which so thoroughly intimidated me I never really seriously considered it. But he couldn't be a role model in the way my major professor is now.

One of my colleagues at the community college who is a very eccentric but delightful man, I haven't talked to since I decided not to take the job. He was someone that I commuted with for a while and so I was in regular contact with him. He had a fit when he found out that I hadn't applied for the job. And went around telling people that I had delusions of grandeur, that

I didn't know what I was doing, that I was far better off at the community college than anywhere else and what in the world had gotten into me.

I think maybe part of the reason that I was able to do that was being around people for five years who were in fact willing to admit that they weren't particularly satisfied with what they were doing. They were frustrated to a certain extent, they had dreams that expanded beyond teaching in the community college, but they got married and started a family and it was a good solid steady income . Then each year your pay goes up in a kind of impressive way. But the trade-off just didn't seem worth it to me. And I do think that it is true that I would have always wondered whether I would have been able to go on and finish a Ph.D. and get a different kind of teaching job and that is something I would never have been able to answer if I had stayed. In that sense it is very very positive, what I did. Sometimes it gives me the jitters, in the sense that I really am facing an unknown, but on the other hand I think I made the right decision.

Unlike teaching at the state college and the community college where the two teaching experiences kind of complement each other and they were both equally rough in the sense that students were in classes they didn't particularly want to be in and I had to convince them that they really needed to be there, it was going to be relatively painless and they might in fact learn something. I was at a university where I was getting the top fifteen percent of the graduating classes from California high schools and students, whether they liked English or not, were absolutely committed to taking the class and doing as well as they possibly could and had good study habits and turned in papers on time and the contrast was really unfortunate in the sense that it was about three times harder to teach the community college students and about half as rewarding. At least in an immediate kind of way. I was getting lots of improvement from my students at the university, a great deal of enthusiasm from them and in that sense it was very gratifying.

The respect that is shown to teachers in a higher education setting increases as you get to a school that offers more degrees. The community college instructors are afforded the least amount of respect in the sense that they are only teaching at a two-year college; the state college teachers are afforded a little bit more respect because they are at four-year colleges. And the university faculty is afforded the most distinction because they offer Ph.D. degrees, it's a research institution and the students who are there and the faculty who are there are very serious. I think for some community college teachers, when you are thrown on the bottom of that pile and you see yourself on the bottom, and in addition to that you are teaching students who, not because they are mean or malicious but who really have mixed feelings about school in general, it's very frustrating. The community college instructors have much heavier teaching loads, are expected to be on campus much more often than the other teachers are. The state college instructors have to teach more than the university people, and the only way in which any of that is different is that the community college instructors get paid more and it's almost as if they are getting combat pay or something. But I'm not sure that ends up being enough to make you feel totally satisfied.

It is a valuable place for people and it was a valuable experience for me. Community colleges continue to make a great deal of sense to me. They give students who didn't do particularly well in high school a chance to turn their academic records around and although I think a very small percentage of them in fact do that, it's nonetheless valuable for those few who do.

Commentary

Nancy Warren's profile presents a deep and comprehensive portrayal of what it is like to teach English in a community college. Like many others, she saw herself as coming to teach in a community college almost by accident. She did not articulate the connection between her own difficult experience in a first-rank, elite, and male-dominated graduate department of English in which she had few models of women professors being successful and her transition to seeing herself as a community college teacher of English after she had finished a Ph.D. in a different graduate school.

Once in the community college she was buoyed by the political and pedagogical excitement of the late sixties and early seventies. She immersed herself in the teaching of writing, and on the basis of her former work and her subsequent experience teaching in the community college she published a textbook on the teaching of writing in the community college. But within this framework of productivity and involvement, the realities of community college teaching began to take a toll on her, most clearly represented in her struggle with the teaching of writing.

The teaching of writing is perceived as a national problem. The complexities it presents plagues teachers no matter what the setting of the school or the age level of students. The complex linguistic interaction with psychological, social, organizational, and pedagogical factors has on the whole been only partially perceived by even the best minds that have paid attention to the issue.

In learning to write, psychological issues of purpose and motive interact with the psycholinguistic complexities inherent in the relationship between language and thought. That internal psycholinguistic relationship is affected by social issues of power and control that are inherent in tensions in social class, race, and gender in our classrooms and broader society. Where purpose, motive and practice in writing are least in tension with inequities that flow from social class, racial and gender inequity, the teaching of writing goes more smoothly. But where those forces are in conflict, as they often are in a community college, the teaching of writing is plagued by a sense of drudgery that is hardly understood. When approaching such complexity we often tend to analyze each component of the issues one by one, separating them out in order to allow for sufficient focus and the possibility of command of each. But in the case of teaching and learning to write, such an approach is the equivalent, to use Vygotsky's analogy, of trying to understand the nature of water by analyzing hydrogen and oxygen separately

(Vygotsky 1962).

A major part of Warren's job is to teach writing to students who have had little success with writing in their past experience. Her department understands that sufficient practice is a key to learning to write, and mandates that teachers of writing will have their students write at least three thousand words a semester. What Warren feels and struggles with is how the stories of her students' lives are interconnected to the way they write. But as an individual there is no really effective way that she can deal with that interconnection. All she can do is try to deal with their writing.

Three thousand words a semester means six five-hundred word papers a semester for approximately one hundred students. That means six hundred essays a semester to read and to which she must respond. In a fifteen-week semester, she must read and respond to approximately forty themes a week. Even if she spent only thirty minutes on each theme she would have twenty solid hours a week of marking papers. That kind of concentrated solitary work cannot be done in an office at school in which the ethos is to encourage accessibility to students. That twenty hours a week has to be done at home before or after school. If we allow one night off for rest, Warren must spend more than three hours a night six nights a week marking papers, to say nothing of the time she must have to prepare her classes. And she must look forward to doing that the rest of her teaching career in a community college.

As she said, the reality and the prospects are truly soul-deadening. In its mission of open access and providing a second or third or fourth chance to all who would come, and in its integrity about how writing must be taught, the college looks away from the scope of the task it presents to teachers of English. No matter what she and her colleagues do, the college will not face the impossibility of the task that the structure of the college and indeed the structure of society presents for the community college teacher of English. Warren's college basically closes its eyes to the complexity presented by the fact that, on the whole, the students who go to community colleges have suffered the discriminations of social class, race, and gender that abound in our country. Those discriminations affect most deeply the students' relationship to language and their sense of purpose in using language. For them to learn to write adequately would take almost a one-on-one reconstruction of their previous experience with writing in order to understand where the lack of success began, how it was reinforced, where the injuries of class, race, or gender began to take effect on their writing; all of which would require the teacher of writing in community colleges to have a significantly smaller load, and a commitment and significant scholarly interest in the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the issue, a scholarly interest reinforced by the college.

Instead, the college offers, in addition to a remedial learning resource center for the most unsuccessful students, a nod to the problem by reducing by one the number of classes English teachers must teach if they teach composition. Because the idea that good teaching is separate from research is endemic to community colleges , they give little support for teachers to study the roots of the issues they face in the teaching of writing. They tell them, in effect, if they don't like their work there are plenty of other people who would want their jobs. As Warren says, this type of oppression is not done as a result of a conspiracy or of hard-heartedness. It is done out of a collective lack of comprehension of the complexity of teaching writing, interacting with financial realities. And it is supported by the false assumption that the job of teaching writing can somehow be done successfully at the community college level with students who have not succeeded before, with very little change in the approach that has been used with the students up to that time.

The result for Warren is that she feels a constant and pervasive sense of never doing her work as well as she thinks she should. More destructive to her own sense of well-being, she simultaneously understands the oppressiveness of the system and yet still manages to take individual responsibility for it. She lives in a contradiction within her own view of the world and herself. She sees the system as oppressive and yet she maintains individual responsibility for what happens in the classroom. Finally she is left with not knowing what to do but be thankful for the vacations that give her some respite from it all.

She is in a situation that is a mirror of that of her students, only she is more conscious of it. Her students, usually by accident of birth, are operating in a social system stacked against them and they, too, are encouraged to take individual responsibility for their situation (Clark 1960). While the system may work to "cool out" students operating within this social dilemma and contradiction, how do teachers face the dilemma with which they must contend? Is there a parallel cooling-out process for teachers?

There was a certain generosity of spirit that flowed from Warren as she talked about how different her own college experience was from that of her students today. There was an acute sensitivity as she understood that because the community college was more of a commuter college than a place providing a sense of community, that the classroom was one place where that sense of community could be approached. That made the classroom a doubly sensitive place for her students because their experience in the classroom dominates their college experience.

Warren finally began to reflect on how she and her colleagues at the university were accustomed to classifying students in terms of being dumb or smart. But somehow the more she worked with her students and came into contact with the complexity of their education and their lives, the more uncomfortable she became with the easy use of those terms. She wants to share with them her experience of literature but struggles more and more with the consequences of the difference in their background and hers. Finally, as she continues to teach, she reflects on the fact that she is moving farther and farther away from her own base in graduate study. She has lost the intellectual base of support she once had in her literary studies, and must face the complexities of her job without discovering new sources of intellectual energy .

One response of community colleges to students with extreme difficulty with reading and writing has been to establish language resource centers. Elizabeth McKay directs one such center in California. She was hired by her urban community college with a large minority population to teach reading and vocabulary. Her job is to work almost on the level of basic literacy training with adults who have gone through the public school system and have hardly learned how to read and write. More lately her classes are filled with immigrants for whom English is not the native language. Community colleges throughout the country have set up the equivalent of programs like the one in which Elizabeth McKay works . She struggles with what she knows and understands so deeply. Unlike Nancy Warren she does not take personal responsibility for the dilemmas she faces daily. Rather,she tries through individual intellectual effort to understand an approach to a way out of the dilemma.

Elizabeth McKay's central understanding, however, is akin to that of Nancy Warren. As she worked with James, a street-wise Black who could hardly read or write, she faced the basic realization that he was too smart not to be literate. All conventional senses of smart and dumb, of what is intelligence, and the relationship between ability and performance were called into question when she realized that here was a very intelligent adult Black man who could not read. She wants to understand what it is about American schooling that results in the paradox of functional illiteracy among intelligent people who have participated in our system of compulsory education. She wants to know why they don't function in the schools and why the schools don't function for them. She goes through the painstaking process with James of reconstructing his education with reading and writing from the very beginning. McKay came to a fundamental point in her experience when she realized that James was too smart, that he had the "gift of gab" and that there was something very wrong in the fact that he had not learned to read. She wanted to understand that failure.

The work she developed in the college through Project Bridge is deeply connected to her personal intellectual interest. Only for most of the faculty in her department, her intellectual work, her graduate study, her research is unknown. She tried once to bridge the gap between her intellectual interests and her work in her department with her colleagues. As she conducted an inservice workshop she was confronted in as bald a way as possible by the consequences of the historical separation of research and teaching in the community college; she experienced directly the resulting anti-intellectualism and resentment of universities that flows from working in an institution that is perceived as lower and lesser. The shock of that confrontation was enough to confirm to Elizabeth McKay that she should keep her intellectual world to herself. While in the last few years she had developed a deeply satisfying collegial relationship, it is not clear from the interview data whether even that relationship is safe ground for sharing her sense of intellectual seriousness about what is disturbing about American society and schooling.

Her Project Bridge is an applied projection of her intellectual work. She recognized what she called the remedial backwash of community colleges where student after student takes remedial course after remedial course, but, because they fail to understand or are too angry about the rules of the game and the boundaries of school structures, make no progress whatsoever. She and her colleagues developed a project that integrates work with language with learning the rules of the college game.

Through her interview we received one of the most dramatic insights into the developing and increasing role of mediated and programmed instruction in community colleges. Developing mediated and programmed instruction is one of the most prominent fads in community college education. McKay is straightforward about what it really means to her. She uses it when she cannot deal with the student, when she has no hope of developing a relationship, when she knows the accumulated anger and craziness is too difficult for her or her tutors to try to develop a relationship. She turns then to plugging a student into mediated programmed instruction. It is clear to us as we have interviewed faculty across the country, that resorting to programmed and mediated instruction is a mechanization of learning that comes from, in the best of cases, a sense of despair that has been confronted, and in the worst cases a mindless substitution of machinery for relationships as an easy response to the complexity with which community college students confront their colleges.

Elizabeth McKay knows that she is teaching students who are actors in and acted upon by deep social and individual tensions and contradictions. Her imperative is to go to graduate school, do a doctorate that will somehow contribute to an understanding and amelioration of the problems. But as a woman, as a wife, as a mother, and as a community college faculty member, she must pursue her intellectual imperative by getting up at three-thirty in the morning to read and study, and must organize her work around her household obligations. She must be all things to all people and still protect deep within herself the intellectual aspirations she has and the imperative she feels.

As a woman and as a teacher in a community college she must keep her intellectual world separate from her world of family and her world of work. Given the nature of the college and the nature of our sexist society, that deep intellectual flame that she carries around inside of her seems to have to stay separate from the other worlds she has carved out for herself. In interviewing her we felt the loss: that each of the worlds could not know the other completely.

Philip Campbell works in a setting different from both Nancy Warren and Elizabeth McKay. His community college is in a California suburban area. His college had a reputation for sending a high number of its students on to the university, especially when he first started teaching there. His profile reflects the historical changes that have occurred in the community colleges in the sixties and seventies. He graphically recreates the world of the sixties and student-centered education and his current back-to-basics response. He senses all the complexities that Warren and McKay do, but outwardly at least he seems more protected from the toll those complexities take . One of his responses has been to carve out a course in the teaching of Shakespeare that is his and for which he is well known. As long as he can connect to his students through his course in Shakespeare, he remains vitally involved in his work.

He has also taken a political path. An early advocate of unionization, he took on a leadership role in the face of Proposition 13. He fought for his and his colleagues' security in the face of shrinking local resources and the increased emphasis on career education which reduced the number of students taking humanities courses. He decided not to take on mid-level administrative roles that were offered to him because he sensed that they were dead-ended and he could make as much money teaching in the evening division and during the summer doing work he enjoyed. His response is a political and personal one. He is doing what he set out to do and he makes sure that he can enjoy what he does by protecting his interests and working conditions through leadership in the union. He ponders on the dilemma of the dropout, and he recognizes the effect of the increased size of the institution and the new facility which separates and isolates the faculty. Yet at the same time he has built up enough leverage for himself that he can do pretty much what he wants to do. He too must face the dilemma of teaching writing; his response to the labor of grading papers is to use teaching assistants who are available to him in the cosmopolitan area in which he works . He knows the problems of the community colleges, but he affirms their distinctive contribution and feels in many ways that they do things that the university cannot do. He has a sense of power and opportunity that allows him to continue to affirm his work in the face of the problems he senses. He operates in such a way as to protect his sense of what the college must still be for the faculty who teach in it.

Janet Ingersoll's profile presents a far different story. She had five years of experience in the community college, four as a part-timer and one as a full-time teacher. She followed the route now often urged upon those who seek jobs in teaching : somehow get into the system, wait in line, be persistent, and finally get the position you want. When that strategy finally paid off for Janet Ingersoll, she decided that she did not want the job. Her former colleagues were hurt; she felt she was taking a risk in rejecting the job. In following the path that led to her decision considerable understanding of the work of community college teachers can be gained.

Ingersoll started as a student teacher at a community college; simultaneously she was a teaching assistant at the state college where she was a master's degree student, and later at the university where she became a doctoral candidate. She had therefore the unusual experience of teaching, either simultaneously or within a short time of each other, at the community college, state college, and university levels. She experienced in her teaching as directly as possible the hierarchy of higher education.

As a part-timer in a community college she got what was left over by the regular faculty. Classes in English were tracked and she got the lower tracks. She dealt with students who she felt did not want to be there; but she committed herself to an expenditure of energy, thoughtfulness, and imagination that would somehow win them over. While having the satisfaction of some individual successes, other factors determined her experience: the anger inherent in the classroom context in which she was teaching; the resentment towards the system reflected in the actions of the students; the unpredictability of dropouts; the commitment of the administration to maintaining numbers while at the same time urging standards that had some integrity; the easy slide toward mechanized instruction to which she saw her college moving ; the division between the vocational and the academic; the lack of women models who could serve as her mentors, the frustration of the endless grading of papers of students for whom writing seemed meaningless at best and was resented at worst; her inability to connect, as Elizabeth McKay had, to an intellectually sound graduate program which could resonate to the intellectual and applied concerns she had; the fact that she saw the community colleges becoming a dumping ground for convicts and mentally-ill people who she knew could not be taken seriously by any community college and whom the state was not taking seriously by sending to the college. All this added up to a sense that, even when her teaching was going well, there was something wrong with teaching in the community college.

What was wrong, as she figured it out, was its place in the hierarchy , its attempts to cater to everybody, its lack of an intellectual energy that could sustain and undergird the faculty as they faced the complexity they had to face. She feared that if she accepted the security of the community college position she would get caught by the material advantages of a secure salary at the cost of her intellectual interest and her quiet aspirations to go on with her graduate studies. Agonizing over the decision reflected her sense of possibility of what she as a woman might be able to do, and her self-doubts about the risk she was taking in turning down the opportunity of full-time teaching in the community college.

Her resolution of the complexities facing teachers of English in community colleges was to get out, not to accept the uneasy feeling that comes with teaching in an institution that is near the bottom of the totem pole in higher education. Her choice was not one of disloyalty. As she worked out her interview with us, she took pains to say that the community college system played a very valuable role; she knew that the logic of what she was saying in the interview was a severe criticism of the community college and she felt uncomfortable offering that judgment to two who were outside the system. But the decisive critique had been finally in her own personal action. She made a choice not to be a community college teacher.

The profiles of English teachers we have presented are not idiosyncratic. They were chosen because they illustrated with scope and depth the complexity of being an English teacher in a community college . Each teacher has a different response to the situation. Warren has hope in vacations and the renewal it brings, and in the fact that teaching is still one of the jobs that a person can do with relative autonomy once inside the classroom. McKay keeps hidden an intellectual energy and preoccupation that offers much to her college but that she pursues almost in private. It is a very strange phenomenon that such a public experience as being a doctoral candidate has to be treated as such a private experience as a result of the anti-intellectual and sexist disjunctions which she must face. Campbell deals with the situation by seeking power through unionization to protect faculty interests. Ingersoll chooses to opt out of a context which will finally not allow her to go as far as she wants to go intellectually.

English teachers, because their task is to work directly with the teaching and learning of language, are subject to the most intense contradictions of community colleges, but their experience, while perhaps more comprehensively in touch with those contradictions, is not unique to them. Many of the same forces affect the experience of teachers of the humanities which we explore in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Against the Tide: The Work of Humanities Faculty

Introduction to the Profiles

In 1980 the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges published Strengthening Humanities in Community Colleges (Yarrington 1980). The book explores the state of humanities instruction in community colleges and describes a critical state of affairs. The 1970's saw a narrowing of the collegiate curriculum offered in community colleges. According to Cohen and Brawer "Except for political science, history, and literature, many two-year associate degree granting institutions abandoned the humanities entirely" (Cohen and Brawer 1982, p. 287).

The loss of commitment to the humanities during the 70's was not a phenomenon in higher education unique to the community college. Throughout four-year colleges and universities there was a flight of students and money away from the humanities as the economic situation tightened and college graduates began to have difficulty acquiring jobs which had normally been associated with holding a degree in the humanities. But the community college by design and with the reinforcement of federal policy took the lead in substituting a notion of career education for a liberal education, with the humanities providing the solid core. As Cohen and Brawer put it, "The more successful the colleges became in their mission of providing trained workers for the community, the more precarious became the idea of liberal education within them" (Cohen and Brawer 1982, p. 296).

Through the following profiles and commentary this chapter examines what it is like for community college humanities faculty to teach in a context which seems to be increasingly giving up the tension inherent in a collegiate education between an education meant for exploring, understanding, and appreciating the human condition and an education meant for preparing for jobs.

Profile

MARTIN BRENNER

(Martin Brenner, a man in his forties, teaches music at a surburban California community college. He was interviewed once in his office and twice at his home in the summer of 1981.)

We come from Nebraska and we lived in a town where there was a small Lutheran college where all of the kids went. Originally the intent was pretty much that all of us would become full-time workers in the Lutheran Church. The fact that I came to the community college was never orginally planned. I suppose that is the case with many people who teach here. As a matter of fact I think I always wanted to teach at a four-year college. As a child I wanted to be a teacher, but probably more than anything I wanted to be a musician and probably a church musician. I spent seven years in choral music and organ, and when I graduated I went to work in the Lutheran Church in Chicago.

The thing that really made me to make up my mind to go into college teaching was the birth of our daughter. I haven't thought about this for a long time, but when she was born and I used to hold her and I'd say, "Why do I want to support this family doing something that I don't want to do? Now that's really silly. Do what you want to do." I decided to take that year off and work on my master's full-time and my wife taught and we had a babysitter and it was one of those incredible years.

The work on my master's really opened up to me all the things that I didn't know. I remember going for a piano audition and how terribly I did at that. I realized then that there were a lot of areas that I was really weak in, so much that I didn't know, and so many areas that I had huge gaps of knowledge, general knowledge about music history and music, keyboard and vocal skills. It was pretty devastating at the time. I realized how much I had to do. I had been told so often, having gone to a small college, that those big schools don't really care about individuals. I discovered there that they did, and they really were concerned about your program and what you were doing. I became a TA shortly after I got there. I taught music literature and music appreciation classes. It was a good experience because it opened up a whole world of music that I wasn't even aware of. A whole area of the secular was new to me because I had been pretty cloistered in the Lutheran Church.

My whole life was involved in the church, my work was involved with the church, my social life was partly too. My wife's influence on me in that regard is very strong because her tradition wasn't that, she hadn't gone to any of the Lutheran schools. Just by marrying her, I was already kind of reaching out a little bit away from the tight, close world I had lived in. It is kind of hard to break away. You don't know how many people you are going to hurt in the process. It took me a little while to make that break, but once I did there was no turning back.

I told the minister that I wanted to resign because I wanted to teach in a college. I wanted to look for a job in a public college. He accepted it okay; he was in shock really. Interesting, you probably imagine that relationships change after that. With him it never did. He was always super to me. But there were others I felt that it was hard for them to accept. For them the whole world was the church, that was all there was. I had come to the point where I realized that that wasn't all there is. I decided at that time that I didn't want to pursue teaching in the parochial school anymore; I wanted to teach college. And so I decided to resign and look for a job .

The first kind of a fortuitous opportunity came to teach down at a state teachers' college in the Midwest. I thought it was going to be a long-term situation, but it turned out that the fellow I had replaced decided to keep the door open to return, so he took a leave of absence with an option to return. He decided to return. And so I was only able to stay one year. The following year I got a job at an all women's junior college. That wasn't the best situation. It didn't work out too well. We just stayed there one year.

I always wanted to work on my doctorate. And one of the best places to do that in choral music is the University of Southern California. So we decided to come to California. We packed everything up and moved to California. I was going to work on my doctorate and my wife was going to get a teaching job . Our daughter was just three or four I guess at the time. So we came out here very poor; we put everything in our U-Haul. When you are twenty-nine you can do stuff like that. We didn't have a place to stay or a job. I never did get my doctorate. I never went to S.C. I started there. I was thinking of going but we both got teaching jobs that summer. I was teaching in a junior high school and my wife taught sixth grade in another school. I didn't teach music, thank God. I taught some science and some math and in the process I was working on my credential. I had to take a couple of courses to get that. One course called "The Junior College" I think it was called, another was a course in higher education. I already had my master's degree and all you really needed was that course plus your master's to get your credential. The junior college course was taught by a woman who had been a counselor at my present community college. I didn't know it at that time, but she taught there and had taught for some years and she knew various administrators there quite well. Each week as we moved along towards the semesters' end she would announce various hiring teams that would be coming over to interview. In those days they just needed teachers like mad. She mentioned that they were looking for a music teacher.

I made the application. I had the interview and it seemed like months later the president called me and invited me to join the staff. I said, "Well, I'm not too sure I want to teach in junior college." Because having gone to the university and so forth I just had a kind of an idea about what junior colleges were like. And I had also taught at a two-year school. I always felt there was a lot of limitations to it. You don't really get the upper division students, that kind of thing, the ones who perhaps are more proficient because they have a little more expertise . So I always had a little bit of reservation about it. I suppose a lot of us had when we started. I always thought that I would go work on my doctorate after that at some point. Realizing it was just a community college in terms of the age of the students, it gave me pause because I knew I couldn't have the best choral group as you could from one of those other colleges. If you have students through four years, oftentimes you really develop a tradition. The community college --it is a whole different kind of world in terms of the length of the time you have your students in order to get them trained.

Here at the community college now my typical schedule involves choral music and vocal music, music appreciation, a music literature class. And also I direct an evening group as well, a choral group. We are on a fifteen-hour schedule, and this is an area which is hotly debated in terms of what is considered an adequate teaching load across the campus.

I teach voice classes. The voice class is pretty classic, in that it is taught around the country in various colleges. You have a group of students anywhere from twenty to twenty-five to thirty, sometimes the class is even larger. Since the days of full-time equivalency we sort of get entrapped in letting more students into the classes than we probably ought to at times, simply because we are afraid of ending up with classes that are too small . It is not a choir, it's not music appreciation, it's not a class in sight singing. It's work with individual voices. I compare it a lot to a speech class which has lots of lecture situations, demonstration situations, by the instructor. But then, you know, everybody gives their speech. Everybody sings their songs. We spend a good deal of time at the beginning of the semester going through basic vocal techniques, concepts that are applicable to everybody, no matter what level they are. Learning how to breath, learning all the concepts of projection, talking about diction. Then you begin to work with the song material. Teaching a voice class is very frustrating in a community college in many ways because on the one hand you have got some students who are capable of learning their own music. They can go out and take a piece of music and sit down at the piano and work it out, because they are musicians. But you have a lot of students who don't have that at all. They don't know a whole note from a rest, so they don't really have any way of learning the music on their own. We used to use a regular textbook with music in it. But they just couldn't learn it.

I went on sabbatical about five or six years ago. I went around the state and observed various voice classes and got different ideas about what different people did. I had been teaching my voice classes like a product of the sixties, everyone can do their own thing kind of approach. And that works for some people fine, but for a lot of people it's not very good, especially in a discipline like music where you just have to develop certain skills. So I finally decided, rather than just let them learn any material that they wanted , to get them into good vocal technique. I say, "I have this song material that you are going to be using during the semester. You will pick from these. There are about sixteen or twenty different pieces of music all the way from folk music to classical songs to Italian songs to some German and American folk songs." This has worked out very well. It becomes like a seminar class in which everyone performs for each other. I am the accompanist and they work on their materials. You just never get through it all in a given class period. They make a list on the board; you get ten or twelve students who want to sing in a day and there is no way that you can get through them all especially if you're going to talk about each situation.

I instruct the students how to handle the matter of suggestions and criticism. If you lay it out well enough so that you don't frighten anyone off or stifle them from making comments, you can end up with some very good discussions. After they perform I usually ask them first of all to make comments of their own. What did you think about it, how did you feel? There is alot of insight gained oftentimes when they begin to realize what they have been doing. Usually they are extremely critical of themselves. I don't know if you have been in those kind of situations where you work with students who just performed in front of a class, which for many of them is the first time; it is just an unbelievable experience. They do everything from wanting to leave to getting literally nauseous. Some of them will cry. I mean the emotions are just overwhelming. Many of them just get nervous and when they are finished they are just shaky until they get used to it. The students will be often very self-critical and often even miss the best part of their own performance. I try to get them to learn to take praise too, because you don't get that very often from anybody and when people say, "Hey, that was really good," usually they'll say, "Oh, it wasn't, it was lousy." They really put themselves down. Anyway, they go through a self-evaluation where they say, "This part went well, and this didn't." And then I'll kind of sum it all up by various means.

The typical lower-division voice class situation, a lot of students that are taking it because it is an area of interest to them, something that they always wanted to do. A lot of them come to voice class out of rock music or folk music or they want to sing better in their church choir. I have a lot of adults in this class too. Some of them just make remarkable progress. They come to class having always wanted to be able to sing but they have never been able to do it. A lot of them postponed the inevitable for many weeks before they finally got up. After they finally have done it, almost everyone is just exhilarated. I mean when they are through there will be cheers.

I talk to them a lot about accepting praise. Any musician knows that there were many mistakes. You just know that. So someone comes up to you and says, "Boy, that was a wonderful concert, I was really impressed." I think you should accept praise; even if you don't agree, you say, "Thank you." I tell the class"Let's face it, you came to this class a little bit because of ego and you want to get better at something that you do so the people will praise you. To deny that is maybe to slow down the process of learning ."

I tell them that in order to get an A in the class they will have to have performed in another language. They can't get an A just doing the folk songs because those are a lot easier to learn. If you want to get an A you have had to work at a couple of more difficult songs. Grading is very difficult for that class. The administation wants us to write up a sheet and say this is how the grading will be done and by the time I finish explaining all this I have got pages . It is difficult to put that down on a piece of paper.

Music Literature is the basic course in listening, developing skills in listening to music. We have another course which is music appreciation, more of a history of music designed for the non-technical approach, for the non-musician. The whole approach is for developing the ear from the beginning. In the old days teachers of music appreciation put a piece of music on and they'd tell a story about it. I try to immerse them in the whole idea of listening. And that is difficult because most college-age students come to music with rock and roll in their background. It makes every other kind of music sort of pale next to it. To sit and listen to Mozart after that is difficult. I learned so much since I started teaching at the community college. I'm not very authoritarian in my approach. I tend to bend over backwards for people who have problems relative to tests and grade situations.

The A Cappella choir is the typical college choir. The last few years the choirs all over the state have gone down in size in all of the community colleges. Students aren't taking them. The average student load in community college is under six hours a week. Most of them are working so there are a lot of things that they are not taking. I suppose in some ways that's my favorite place to work. I enjoy my other teaching too, but I think that's the course I wanted to do the most when I got out of college. I just love to conduct. That rapport that you get with students in a performance situation and in a learning process is really dear and special. It goes back to all my feelings about music and why I wanted to do it. I like being in front of the students and working with music and getting them to perform, getting them better at it, gaining insights into the music. The nuts and bolts things, all the details. They work hard because what they want is a good product. And to get that you have to work hard. You have to really practice.

I think we [the Music Department] are viewed with some degree of respect. There was an English teacher who said, "I hate glee clubs." One instructor made some very definite comments about all the religious music that we do in the choral program. He thought that was inappropriate for a secular institution. It just turns out that most of the great choral literature has sacred text. I even talked to the students about this; this is not a church choir situation where you have people really thinking about worship. You look forward to getting some of the Mormon kids or Baptist kids or Lutheran kids who had some good singing experience because you know they are the ones who can help the others learn the Latin.

I haven't been on any committees for the last few years. I did committee work for years and years. I really got tired of it. You get involved in committee work, it just takes too much time, too much energy away from what you should be doing at the college. I am pretty active in the department . We are a pretty close-knit group. I have a lot of voice students come to me and they want to work through their music before they sing it in class. Extra rehearsals, the choir and the chamber singers, auditions take place,music teachers spend a lot of time with students outside of the class. You are just around a lot to work with them.

The community college situation changed in the last few years. We used to be wealthy with students and wealthy with money and those days are gone. Most of our students are not music majors. We have a lot of community people, older students, who come in. A lot of our students are very gifted musically but they are not applying to be music majors. We do have that certain group that are music majors taking music theory and taking the regular sequence of courses. They'll transfer on after one or two years to another college.

We have a very broad base. Our constituency is not a conservatory group. That's why I said when I first came to the community college I recognized that would be the case. And I really wondered about whether I should pursue my career in that direction or whether I should really opt for a state college. I feel pretty secure in the decision to stay here because I have had a great opportunity for myself personally to grow. Some of my colleagues, friends that teach at the state colleges, are not nearly as free to do some things as I am . We are a little freer to do and experiment with things than in the typical state college situation .

Presently all the energy seems to be going into areas of sciences and computers and math. And I don't think that is enough to make a well-rounded person. In some ways it is kind of unfortunate that education has now got to mean totally that when you graduate from college you should at that point have a job in a computer field or whatever it is. You are going to go right to work because you have been prepared for that job. I'm not sure that is what education is for. We at the community college have some of our greatest wealth and success dealing with students who are now coming back to us who have missed out on all these things because they have been so busy making a living and learning how to do a job.

I think it is unfortunate right now that for students at our community colleges their average load is less than six hours. It used to be about twelve, so consequently areas like the arts are suffering in terms of enrollment. Now when our teachers retire from the music department or die, they don't replace them. Sometimes you wonder when you see areas that are much more fertile in terms of students, like the areas of science and math, computer technology and those kinds of things where everybody seems to be gravitating and you sort of hold on for dear life in the area of the arts.

Sometimes you ask yourself the question, am I really doing anything worthwhile? So you try harder or you feel more frustrated by the fact you don't always seem to get all the best students or as many as you want. And then you sort of yearn for greener pastures. I suppose everybody does that a little bit. You think about how much better it would be at the university. I wonder what would have happened had I taken a couple other turns and got my doctorate, maybe even gone to teach at a university. I think that I am capable of doing that, but it's just not the way the directions went. Then I think back on the days when I used to not really want to get up on Monday mornings and go teach grade school. I realize that when I got into teaching in college that I could hardly wait to get to work and that still continues in many ways. I don't have quite the glow I did in those days. We went through a few years where our morale was a little low and the dean was always looking over your shoulder wondering if the enrollment was up.

All the full-time teachers in music are men. It is one of those things that happen. I recall various women who applied for jobs along the way , but they got beat out for various reasons. We tried a couple of times, but the men were just a better choice. Sometimes when a woman did apply, their areas of expertise were so specific. I remember one who was very good and her area of interest was in eighteenth century harpsichord music. Well, you know, the community college needs people who can teach beginning piano and basic music classes.

I always felt a little bit disappointed about not having upper division students. As the years have progressed we have developed and have many more adult students, many of them who have very strong career ideas, very committed to study, in many ways more than a lot of the eighteen to nineteen year olds are. And that's kind of a compensation factor there. I think we have more and more of those all the time. I have a night class, the Masterworks Chorale, which is an area I can just do what I want to. I have better and more committed kind of people involved and more talented singers. That's kind of the way things have gone in the state all over in community colleges . When you are being told that you may have to teach a night class as part of your day load, there have been a number of members of the college who have been really upset by that. It's a discussion that goes around all the time at the college. I think everybody just sort of accepts the fact that it may be inevitable. You say, "Well, I'm just glad that I have a job."

The community college is a little bit different animal I think than the state college, because we have a lot of programs that a typical four-year school doesn't deal with. Those two-year programs, various things from welding to body shop, some of those computer programs, two-year programs for dental hygiene. A lot of them don't probably have a lot of interest in the arts. I don't know how the people in sheet metal feel. They might feel like stepchildren sometimes to the typical collegiate aspects of the college. I never really talked to anybody about that. We accept the fact that a lot of our students in the music department are students who are there for two-year programs for jobs in, for example, dental programs. I think music is more important than sheet metal, and yet I know the instructor who teaches welding, he is a master welder and having come up from a working family I can respect that kind of a thing very much. But I think of college as being more the kind of thing that I went through. A lot of these programs are very successful and we know that's part of the community college that we all accepted when we came here.

I think of the music department as being one of the departments of the school. I don't think of it as being more or less important. I think of it as being part of the campus in which students can transfer to a four-year college. We're contemplating creating a number of career programs that can be completed right there, one in the area of recording. The community college is a perfect place. We've had to rethink in our own minds what music should be at the community college. All of us who teach there have come out of pretty traditional music backgrounds. Some of those areas and aspects of commercial music require skills and preparation which many of us don't have. After all I came out of a church music background and I am more interested in choral directing. I was never an active practitioner of popular music. A lot of us have had to do a lot of retraining of ourselves. For instance, a few years ago I started a jazz choir at the school. I didn't have the experience in the area of jazz choir and I was learning with the students at the time. There are many schools in which they have almost given up on all the traditional programs and have gone almost exclusively to the popular idiom, rock and roll and jazz. We are trying to keep a balance. It turns out that some of the most exciting aspects of commercial music are taking place in the community colleges, in the teaching of jazz and in the area of jazz choirs.

I like to write when I get going, but I just never took the time to do it. I'm always busy looking at music or directing a choir. I'm always going to some rehearsal. My wife encouraged me to write. I don't think the community college encourages it enough. Various people do it just because they are committed to it themselves. One thing to me that has always been lacking in lower division college work is a successful text for voice classes, one that has flexibility , has certain materials that students can use. I have always wanted to do that.

It's almost kind of a byword in community colleges that we haven't been trapped into the publish-or-perish kind of approach to education. There was a period of time when there was a kind of anti-intellectual attitude, and that may have been also in the four-year schools. As if it was better to use all your experiences in your classroom rather than what you have studied. I have always had a feeling that to survive in the music business, even as a teacher of music, you have to prepare yourself, you have to work at your technique and you have to spend a lot of time to get to that point where you can play well or sing well. I always got that feeling even at this community college that those things weren't that important. They aren't nearly as important as how you feel. But I think it is different now. I think everyone has a more traditional approach. There is much more concern about grades again.

I think it's easy to get trapped, I suppose, in a series of situations out of which you can't get yourself . You have a certain standard of living and you don't want to change that. One of my colleagues has a yearning to find a small four-year college somewhere where he can just kind of finish out his years. He wouldn't even mind taking a pay cut to do that. But I don't think I want to. I'm not sure that I want to leave this area. I wouldn't want to go out to some place in Idaho or a small town in Oregon, it just doesn't appeal to me. I don't really have any illusions about who I am. I'm not the greatest choral director, I'm not the best teacher, I'm sure. And yet if an offer came I would sure think about it. Would we want to just unsettle everything? I mean my wife has her career and she loves it and she wouldn't want to give that up. So we are kind of trapped sometimes.

Our department head kept coming to me this last year saying, "What if you have to give up your music lit class? And maybe teach some beginning piano?" I don't want to teach beginning piano. "Or you may have to teach five sections of voice." That may be a way to go crazy. I'm really not too old to try something different, if I really set my mind to it.

I've always been a church musician also and I look forward to the time when I don't have to do it anymore, except I'm not sure I'll ever arrive at that point.

In the church where I am now I am director of music. I was the organist, but I'm not playing the organ now, just directing.I would like to have weekends off. The problem is that the something that I have to give up is something that has income attached to it. That's sometimes hard to make that decision. But you have to be willing to go out and try things, otherwise you won't do anything. I remember once going to a seminar where there was a bunch of the professional choral directors. And one of them said, "I took all the risks and did it. You can do the same thing." I know I don't have the best job in the world. But I have a fairly good thing where I can kind of branch out and be creative and feel that I have accomplished something. I can't imagine that I would pack everything into a U-Haul and drive out to Southern California without any prospects of a job. I can't imagine doing that. Maybe a person ought to always be able to do that.

Profile

CYNTHIA JAMISON

(Cynthia Jamison, in her late thirties, teaches history and psychology in a New York State community college. She was interviewed in her office in the fall of 1981.)

I toyed off and on with the idea of becoming a teacher because I liked school, sort of, probably considered it most closely in tenth grade. Tenth grade was the only grade that I actually wanted to go, I mean get up eagerly to go to school. But generally speaking, my experiences were fairly good. I was brought up in a kind of atmosphere where no one ever suggested that I have a career, and yet I'm sure my parents realized that I would have to work. I went to a preparatory school and I guess in the back of everybody's mind they thought I might marry money or something as people usually do in those circles. I didn't really make any preparations for much of anything.

My mother never did anything in terms of working outside of the house; she was strictly a housewife. A very bright woman but at the same time I think a little bit stifled in the sense that she didn't really have occasion to use her mind and I think she suffered from that. Of course, if she ever found out that I ever told anybody she would have heart failure; and not only that, she probably wouldn't agree with it. My parents weren't wealthy either because they used to moan and groan about money a lot, because I unfortunately lived in the room over the kitchen and could hear everything through the air vents and I used to think we were right on the way to the poor house, because they would be trying to figure out how to squeeze a dollar in some way to get the most out of it. That always worried me. My mother never had a sense of career and so obviously this wasn't passed on to the two girls.

My parents said, "Well, you are going to go to a private school." I said, "I don't want to go, you got to wear those dumb looking uniforms." Then I loved it because you could get up and you didn't have to think about what am I going to wear today, and there were no boys to impress which just suited me fine. The teachers there I'm sure were vilely paid. But a lot of them did it I think because they liked it. I remember having a history teacher whose brother or cousin for awhile was an ambassador. A lot of the girls were scared to death of her and didn't like her at all. And I thought she was great. I had her for English, History, and two years of History of Art. She'd have us write extensively on different paintings. I and a few other enthusiastic types in the class were sort of the hard-core studiers and got all interested in things like various arts and history. I started there in the seventh grade and popped out at the twelfth. They incarcerated us in the place from somewhere around eight to four-thirty in the afternoon. It was great for parents if you could afford to send your kid there you could get rid of him for five days out of the week. It was fabulous on Fridays. You got home at one thirty, that was bliss. My sister went there, my brother went to a private academy. I am the oldest by four years.

There was another woman teacher whose name has now slipped me, who taught English and it was the first time I really caught on to what was going on in English. We were reading some poem by somebody like Keats . She said, "Now what does this mean?" And all of a sudden I had this idea and I thought well, why not, see what happens. I raised my hand and I said, "It seems to me that the poet is talking about beauty can be so intense sometimes as to be painful," and I suddenly realized that I was able to say that sometimes joy can be, there is an intermingling of emotions and she said "Yeah, that is what I think too." I said, "Wow," and then I was off and running. I began to discover that the people who got consistent A's were people who ask the dumbest questions in class. That's when I began to form those friendships, it was around tenth grade. I met this Canadian girl who was so fascinating. Her background was interesting. She would invite me up to her family summer place, on the Canadian side and then I saw another culture. You could see the French Canadian culture, and that was my first real encounter with Roman Catholicism. There was a huge monastery nearby and we used to go over there occasionally.

I am fascinated by the paradox that things are always two sided, which of course makes life much tougher to live. Much easier if you could hate thoroughly or love thoroughly and cleanly in either direction. But if you are honest you can't, and I began to recognize that duality. For some reason it was just given me to see that aspect of life more than maybe some of my companions. So in that sense I tended to pursue my insights in a way that I never would have before. And I think that's one of the big hazards of teaching. To get somebody to say what they mean, you know, organize it and spell it right and punctuate the thing, but say what you really feel and don't just dish back a load of sort of, I mean everything is a platitude in the final analysis because we can never express verbally what really is, the language is at best a somewhat poor approximation of reality. But at least you can make a flying attempt and that's hard to get students to do, cause they are used to people saying well now, that's not right.

The whole private school syndrome, dancing assemblies, I went to those. This is where you met appropriate boys. Now picture me in a strapless evening dress, I mean it was ridiculous; boy, I hated them. They were run by little old ladies with feather boas, and they had a little band and we would all dance. My mother went to this same private school so that was part of the thing. I think they felt that you got a better education than you would have in the local schools at that time.

I can remember when I got out of private school or near the end, people were beginning to sign up and go to interview for college and I thought, do I really want four more years of this. And I didn't really hate school either, and finally my mother said, "Well, are you going to college or aren't you?" And I thought, which is worse, school or a job? So I left for school. And so that is how I got to college.

College was amazing because it was diametrically opposed to high school. Absolutely unstructured, they kept their eye balls on the students which I found out after the four years of existence there, they knew what you were up to. But they never harassed you until you were obviously going to screw yourself royally. I remember my parents came and I think they weren't too wild about the place because of course they had a very high population of sort of beat looking people from New York and these long-haired hippie types walking around in sandals and I can remember when they left me there and I had that moment of terror as they drove off, my mother saw a couple of these characters float around campus and said, "Dear," and I said "Yes?" "I hope you don't end up looking like that." Gees, naturally, immediately I started to grow my hair and wear sandals. But I loved the place, absolutely loved it. I remember one time, I took a car pool to New York City and they were all Jewish and they were chattering on about various holidays and what they were going to do and I felt , boy, am I out of this one.

In many ways college began to open up other areas.History was a big thing. There was a very good guy there who has since died, who had a medieval history course and I had already been kind cf sucked into the historical scene but then I began to figure, well, this is what I ought to major in. I saved some of the things that I wrote. We had to write a thesis. So I took a historical problem, vilely researched I'm sure. What I wanted to do was analyze , I originally thought of analyzing the position of four of the families in England during the later part of the Middle Ages . I ended up having to confine it to one of the great families. In a term I managed to live with a friend of mine in New York City and I spent the entire time in the New York Public Library trying to divine the message in Latin texts . I wrote it; at least it certainly taught me a lot about research. So intellectually I really began to explore history much more than I had. And you see they didn't force you to take certain courses. I have a scientific bent too, but virtually no science, and math I am vile at, and that was partly because I feared it. Last math class I saw was in tenth grade and I said good-bye. I was ecstatic and that's not good. I should have had more.

I met my husband in college. He was preeminently a geologist at that point, and I always loved collecting stones and things and he had a car, I mean, this was bliss. I am the only person that I knew whose first real date with a guy is to go to a quarry. The best part was the summer about three months after I met him. He wanted to go to see the total eclipse of the sun and he had to travel to a spot when it went across Maine. He said, "Bring a sleeping bag," and I can remember agonizing, how the hell am I going to get out of the house with a sleeping bag. I remember saying to my mother, "I've got to take a sleeping bag" and she said, "Why?" And I said, "Because we don't know where we are going to be and we want to see the eclipse, it only lasts for forty-five seconds, you know." And she said "Well, don't let your passions run away," and I said, "Don't worry about it mother, I'm into the eclipse." After I got my bachelors, I worked at a large university library, which was a lot of fun but certainly no way to make a living. Then I got married and came here. The college was expanding rather rapidly at that time and they needed people for teaching and I came over and, lo and behold, they hired me. They were fascinated: I was the only person who had gone to a real preparatory school and to a fairly high-powered but rather bizarre college. I sort of fell into this job, rather than really came to it because of design.

I did teach English composition until about three years ago, the situation changed quite dramatically. I was given the introductory psychology course, two halves of a larger full-year course. So I had to retool to some extent for this other course. Because we still are under a system where we have to have what I call communal finals , I hew very closely to the book ;and I tend to elaborate quite extensively on the text. I follow it, page by page and I make that clear to them. The other preparation for it is that I do have to write multiple choice tests. The multiple choice test is the method of testing and we can add a short report or a paper or some such thing, but the actual testing is multiple choice. Those are not easy to write, I have discovered over a period of time. They are difficult. I try to think it through, attempt to think of what would a student do with this question . If I were a student, what would I look at that would make me confuse the issue rather than go directly to the question. And that's not easy to figure out because sometimes they are so desperate for the answer they over-think the question.

The eight week grade to some extent is a scare tactic. And to some extent I think this eight-week grade gives them just something to beat on the students with, if they are getting slack, but it does not go on the transcript. There is some worry about the number of warm bodies hanging out in a room. We do take attendance. This place is fairly rigid that way. For the attendance we keep booklets. We are supposed to do that daily. At the end of the term they are handed in. Another reason of course for attendance taking is some people are getting veterans benefits and things like that and they want to keep tabs on them.

I hadn't done anything with psychology for a long time. Somebody went on a leave of absence and they were short. What they try to do here is round up somebody who is presumably competent to teach something before they try to hire somebody new. They looked around and of all the people available I was the only one who had enough training in psychology to take this course. I said what a wonderful idea because I was definitely ready for a change. Although it might in many ways be the most useful course you can have, English composition is certainly not widely appreciated by anybody, students, administration, anybody. It is very hard to do because of course you are dealing with people who are just plain not interested. Especially when you start trying to talk about grammar and construction and order of thinking on paper when people know they are not going to be writing that much, the society is not geared towards it. I don't think we really collectively as a nation give a damn about the excellence of writing.

I have had another course, a history course, a year-long survey of history from the very beginnings to the present time. I've taught that when there has been an overflow because what I really wanted to do was history. And I finally inherited the mantle of the medieval history course which is a tiny tiny thing because it is an elective. I teach that in the spring. We have never been able to run it for various reasons both terms. It may be just plain scheduling, because a lot of these kids take technologies--people in dental hygiene, x-ray technology, criminal justice, and a lot of those have labs, extensive ones. These people have these huge blocks schedules and anything else is considered a service department. So we have to be, so the theory goes, stuck into the interstices of these people's schedules. The liberal arts department becomes the repository for people who have no idea of what they want to do, which of course doesn't make for very lively classes sometimes. But it does give them some scope and a lot of people will transfer. Many of them came here and thought they would only stay for two years and will go on to four-year schools, so in that sense it is a service. It is a way station in many ways, out of which you can get some very valuable instruction and be trained to do something that is very useful to society. But that tends to be more in the technological area rather than in the humanities.

I think, if you're going to run an English composition course you must demand papers every week. And when you have thirty-five students in a classroom, forget it. That's a lot to correct. It was hard to engender a great deal of interest in trying to fix up their grammar. I tried to bring in examples of why this is important. Articles for example, how industries are becoming more intersted in somebody who is literate and able to read intelligently and write so that you can understand what the person is saying. But that's very hard to tell them when they know they are going to be working on a car. I point out you have to read a manual and you have got to talk to the people who own the cars. It became both easier and harder when we did get into the second half of the term and read some short stories and occasionally plays and some poetry. Because they knew that was even further from say, dental technology. But they also enjoyed it more because reading a story and discussing it can get to be kind of fun if you really get a discussion going.

I found it was very difficult to grade them all with a sense of absoluteness. And it was very hard when you are dealing with a bunch of people who have that kind of sliding scale of interest and organization. I found grading them very hard as a result. Very difficult to do and especially when they get into comparing papers with each other, to be able to say this is worth a B and this is only a C. There are several hard places. One of them is do you grade them so harshly that they give up, which you don't want to do. But you don't want to be too lenient because then they won't try, so you have to hit that middle ground. Then of course you have to be more or less in tune with what everybody else is doing because students are not stupid, they are going to figure that out too. So they are going to start saying, "Well, so-and-so does much easier tests or grades easier." So you don't need that hassle and you could possibly get it from the administration, who might say, "Well, you're out of step with the rest of the department." Because again they want to be able to pass this number of bodies through the institution.

I do point out to my students that a grade is crude, I say it is only an approximation. I also point out a job is always measured on what you see, rather than what's inside. But you never see the full aspect of a person's inner existence from what comes out. I mean in the best sense of the word, everyone has a sort of secret life behind their foreheads, so this is to some extent only an approximation. But neither am I the most lenient grader either. But I am receptive to complaints, for example, about questions on this multiple choice test; I say what I've got to do is review the whole question. If it seems ambiguous to them, I will say to them, "Well, let me check out all the tests and if it does seem strange, then maybe it is a bad question," which does happen occassionally and then I give it the heave.

I have had a bunch of interesting students. I remember one kid in the medieval history course. He had a shirt that said "Monty Python Freak" on it. I looked at that and I said well that bodes well. I mean anybody who likes Monty Python can't be all bad. Anybody who understands that somewhat bizarre humor has to have a brain. At least it is in gear. They all have brains but some of them have never been put into first, you know. Now some of them take the medieval course because they want to, and then others take it because it is the only elective that fits into their schedule and they can't stand history. I don't think relevance is necessarily a big deal. I mean, really, half the fun of doing anything in this life is because it is interesting, not because it is necessarily going to get you a job, bring you money. This Monty Python kid was a good guy,he was a lot of fun, because he came up with all sorts of comments and he loved history, he just got a big kick out of it. The medieval history class in itself allows the people who really have strange interests or who are a little bit off-beat to shine or to open up because there is tremendous latitude for discussion of ideas whereas this is obviously much less so when you are doing English composition or even to some extent psychology.

I like psychology. I felt that there was more scope and also frankly I felt it would be easier in the sense that students might like it better, because when you talk about psychology you are basically talking about yourself and everybody is fascinated in one way or another with their own workings, their inner selves. Even if they have low self-esteem, they are still intrigued by it. I thought the interest quotient would rise and I felt also the subject was more measurable in terms of tests. It was very hard to motivate a student to discuss and take seriously a short story that talked about some little old lady watching people in parks like "Miss Brill" by Katherine Mansfield. Whereas you could talk about the loneliness of old people in psychology directly.

Sometimes they are very quiet. There are some classes that are absolutely mute. I will occasionally ask them questions. It's basically lecture, which is most what people tend to do, they tend to elaborate on the text. I like to light a bomb under them , I hope to interest them so that they will be fascinated by subjects and have a more wide-ranging mental attitude. Life is hard enough, God, if you lose that, what the hell is there? There is all this crud falling in on you from taxes and people whose personal relationships are going to hell in a hand basket and your car's falling apart and your plumbing doesn't work and your clothes don't fit and you feel like you are getting sick, I mean you better be interested in reading,or going and looking at a sunset. Just recently in one class -- we happened to be in a room that sits high up so you can see out over the other buildings--I happened to look out the window and saw just astonishingly beautiful formations and I said, "Look at those things, look at the beauty of those clouds," and there was a little bit of snickering . Gees, you lead one hell of a dull life if you can't notice the clouds, I thought to myself, but I let it pass over cause I didn't want to be derailed at that point into a discussion of whether or not you look at your environment and appreciate it occasionally just for, if nothing else, personal amusement and stimulation.

Sometimes I moan and carry on and mumble and look at the tests and watch people not come to class and I think , what am

I doing? I feel discouraged and I tell them this. I will come in and I will say, "I feel like I am talking to a wall." After I've said something five times, because there are five classes, I begin to think that I am talking to myself. But there is always enough interest that it seems rewarding. If we were a lab course you would get much closer to the students because you get to know them as individuals. I do say one of the problems in this society is we have minimized the idea of education and curiosity just to the point where it only becomes a tool to wealth or power. So I said you've got to develop some kind of internal interest, and I say that's not easy. Then, I point out, one of the problems with aging is that you get tired because after you have lived for forty years or even thirty, things seem to fall short sometimes of expectation even in terms of that kind of excitement of just waking up.

What do I get in return? I don't see it in terms of advancement or anything for me. But rather that it is a way that I can talk to people. I'm not that ambitious, my interests basically lie elsewhere. I mean I'm not going to become a gung ho researcher, I'd much rather spend my weekends and my afternoons outside, you know, so why incarcerate myself in some place where I have to be inside without a window . I'm not going to go on to become some real hyper instructor somewhere and frankly I think when you do advance through teaching, teaching becomes a way station for a lot of people to get into research and there is nothing wrong with research, we need it, but that tends to take them away from the importance of the classroom.

I repeat myself a lot. I purposely do that because I test strictly from the book. If I did it from examples that I gave or notes that I gave, I know I would leave things out. So I make a conscious attempt to duplicate. How can you stand it? Sometimes it gets a little wearing and I say, "Didn't I already say this to these people? No, that was the class before." So it's sometimes a little hard; I find near the end of the day the inspiration kind of departs.

There are some people who think medieval history and psych are monumentally irrelevent to life. I said you can't avoid history,it affects you. I said just the fact that they blew Sadat away recently has probably bent already your existence into an area that you don't know about. This place, although it's technically technological, there is a sense of broadening in the curriculum, and there should be. Like the fact that everyone was cutting out language. I think now they are beginning to realize they better stick it back in.

When I first started teaching, I gave a test and the grades were kind of bad and you know sometimes you get some fairly rough joking out of students about it, but usually not too bad. One kid said, "I'm going to burn your house down if I don't get a good grade." And I said, "Now come on." And he said it again later on. So I told him he better can that kind of talk. It was hard to tell whether he is joking or semi-serious. You know, one hopes it was a joke, but none the less that kind of thng is unpleasant although very rare. And they occasionally make some sassy comments which I don't mind, I mean some of them are kind of cute, and you can just say, "Same to you, buster," or something like that. Sometimes they kind of mean the comments, because I'm sure school urks them a little bit. They have been in it since first grade at least and they are kind of tired of it. But a real threat like that is not nice. And it has happened only once since in my entire career here. It was the same threat. This kid said, "You know, I want a good mark, or I'm gonna burn your house down." And I said, "Listen Buster," I said, I was p.o.'ed, I was so irritated. Never said it again, which astonished me frankly. But I had a headache, I felt like hell and I said this is it, I'm not going to put up with this garbage anymore and just put a cork in his mouth and he never said it again. He was a sort of a big brash guy and just buttoned him right up, which I thought was splendid.

I really enjoy a lot of these students, I think they have a tremendous amount to offer. A lot of them are extremely fine people. They tend to be quiet so you don't sense that at first, but when they begin to talk to you you can sense a tremendous amount of quality . They want to do things well, and they wish to be functional and contributing. I suspect people do stay in jobs to some extent because of inertia but at the same time as I find as I have been going on through this I find it more and more pleasurable. They keep quiet and absorb and just think about things,so more of that kind of questioning goes on than one might suspect. So that is certainly one of the greatest things that keeps me going; it certainly isn't grading tests, that's for sure. The administration has a pretty firm stranglehold on what goes on in this place and legislatures groove on tests and paper work and stuff like that. In some respects actually there is a good thing to it in that it keeps the students on the straight and narrow. I think unless you are really inclined to study on your own or because you like it, you kind of have to light fires under people. The trouble with you two guys is that you take it as an either-or proposition, but everybody is made up of a mixture of things and although I was very much self-directed in certain ways, in other ways I needed the discipline of having a school behind me. I think a person who is truly curious can exist both with a test that might look a little mechanical as well as the material that lies behind a test. I don't even think the multiple choice test is actually that bad. As a matter of fact they prefer this type, they don't like to write, generally speaking, because this is not what is pressed on them in school very much.

I had started doing some graduate work in history and then dropped out of that. I knew I didn't want to teach English comp over a long period of time. When I got the psychology I've been exploring various fields in that. I want to go for the full hilt finally, I think, because it's enjoyable and it's valuable; you get stale if you don't study. I suppose a Ph.D. has some prestige, certainly maybe a little bit more money, not much. It would be more a personal thing, although it would be appreciated, I'm sure. Increasingly more are found in community colleges because people aren't moving around much, mobility has dropped. People are getting a degree for insurance purposes, to make sure they have greater mobility and more job taking ability. I think they are also doing it because they enjoy it and they might feel stagnant otherwise. I have noticed, with the exception of some new faces, basically the people around here are the people who have been here for a long time. When I first came here this was not the case. There was a tremendous turnover. People floated in and floated out. One of the things that I would like to do is move into some more complex areas of psychology and certainly do some more in history. I might do--if they will allow it-- a split major as it were, both history and psychology.

I like to do a lot of camping, and let me tell you the conversations that go on in the woods are definitely not intellectual and that's very enjoyable too because you can't be that intense all the time, you burn out. I have always felt a little bit apart and yet very much in tune with the rest of humanity. I suspect that's a part of existence, that if anybody truly examines their lives, they are going to find that this is the case to some extent, there is always a setting apart.

When you have a college where people come out to stay in the place for any length of time, I mean so many of these students hold jobs, they haven't time for anything other than going to class and doing a little bit of homework. As soon as people are through in their classes they split, boom, they are gone. The apartness that I sense occasionally is that, well, frankly, I think this country is rather anti-intellectual. In the sense that I think most people, and I can even sense it in myself, value knowledge as an end either to power or money or both. Rather than something by which they actively engage their minds and keep from croaking off between now and their actual death, you know, keep their minds going. I'm not a high-powered scholar. I like to enjoy things, I like to read, I like to speculate, I don't want to write a paper. You know, I'll do it, and as a matter of fact when I do do it, I do it well.

I don't want to lose that medieval history course and I will be quite happy to stay in say a certain level of psychology in order to keep my mitts on that course. It is all mine and I make up the final and I can do anything that I damn well please in it. I don't want people meddling and telling me what I have to do, so I'm going to fulfill certain requirements that are going to make it look good.

I think this college has done immeasurable good around here. Remember you are dealing with students, some of them, who have not spent time away from home who, generally speaking, are not cosmopolitan. I have had students who were absolutely terrified of this place and it's like a big high school. Now what could be terrifying about a high school? And yet they say, it's so big, it's so impersonal, and they are really upset. And so oddly enough I feel tests in a weird way reassure them. The framework I think is very similar to a high school. There are even bells in this building, not all of them, but in some of them. But even within that context you can give people tremendous variety of thought.

There is no reason that would force me out of the area. There's not an economic rationale, my husband isn't moving or I'm not moving, I've not really thought about it. I can explore certain subjects on my own. I can read history, I do other things which I like. I feel that I do contribute; and if they demanded more in terms of certain time considerations, I could give it without feeling I was compromising the rest of my existence. I mean, face it, any work gets in the way of your life in some respect. So there are things that remain unfixed around the house, and things that I don't have enough time for at this point. There is enough pressure just by teaching that you feel you have to improve intellectually, but nobody is directing it in a certain explicit way which is just as well. I tend to react badly to that. I don't like to be pushed and shoved even though I may recognize that there is a value in what lies behind that.

TIMOTHY BAILEY

(Timothy Bailey, in his forties, teaches a variety of humanities courses at a suburban community college in Massachusetts. He was interviewed twice in his office and once at his home in the spring of 1980.)

I was born in 1933. I had a happy childhood. I went to a private Catholic high school which emphasized classics and a traditional type of education. From there to a Jesuit college. My majors were philosophy and Latin and Greek.

After leaving college I went into the service. I was a member of the ROTC Program at college. I went to officer's maintenance school and became a maintenance officer, which was probably the most absurd thing that they could ever have made me, because of my mechanical aptitude; but that's the service. I had a relatively secure tenure in the service. I came out in '57 and I guess I was about twenty-four, and I decided I'd make a go of it in the business world. I worked as a manager trainee. I worked for an envelope company selling. I was a stock broker for six months; I guess my last job before I got into teaching was as a systems analyst.

About the year 1963 I decided to go into teaching. I took a cut of about fifty percent to go into this job. I was dissatisfied with the business world. It's not that I wasn't making enough money, the money was pretty good, but I was just generally dissatisfied. I always had a love of academics. I had graduated cum laude from college and I really liked studying. It didn't come easy to me and I had to work at it. I wasn't one of those guys who just did nothing, I had to work very hard for it.

I decided that I would go into the teaching profession, so I sent out about a hundred resumes to high schools and private schools saying that I could teach Latin, Greek or English, and hoping that somebody would use me. As a matter of fact, a young brother at a local Catholic high school died , and I took over his job teaching Latin and English. I went up for the interview and the secretary by mistake put me in the wrong room. I don't know if you've ever been in a room where you felt a little bit cold atmosphere; I looked over in the corner and there was a casket in the corner and I couldn't believe that there actually was a corpse in the thing. I said, "What kind of a job is this, what do they want me to do?" And the brother just walked in at that time and said, "Oh, she put you in the wrong room, that's Brother Arnold, you're taking his place." I didn't know whether that was an omen of things to come but that's how I got my job and I stayed there one year teaching Latin and English. I stayed a year and then I accepted another job because the pay was a little better. I ended up teaching at this prep school six periods a day, five days a week. I taught Latin, Greek, German, and English. And I thought that was just wonderful, teaching thirty hours a week.

I guess it was in 1967, a friend of mine who teaches here at the community college was made the director of the evening division. I got a job teaching philosophy in the evening and then the next year they needed someone in philosophy and I was the only one teaching philosophy in the evening. I came up and took the job teaching philosophy.

I'm going to have to backtrack now. When I accepted the job here, I already had a master's degree in philosophy. In 1966 I got accepted to the doctorate program; I decided I'd make the jump to the Ph.D. in philosophy. I eventually got through with a Ph.D. in 1973. I would have gotten the Ph.D. before that but I had a couple of personal situations that prevented me. I got married in 1964. My sister had died and my mother had died two days after I graduated from college, so we had sort of tough luck as far as deaths in the family, at least in the beginning, and as it turned out later on too. The children were born in 1965, 1967, 1969 and 1971. They were all boys; and two of them died of congenital heart problems. So that's one of the reasons the Ph.D. took so long.

I was able to receive the Ph.D. money-wise because when I was in the service I had gained two and a half years payment I could get for the service. In fact I still had some time left after the Ph.D., so I decided I would apply for another master's degree. I applied for it in the classics, and finished in 1979, a master's in Latin and Greek. So that finished all my degrees, and I made up my mind I would never again attend a classroom or write a paper for anybody after two masters and a Ph.D.

Childhood was a very happy time up till about when I was fifteen. It was carefree, I guess. Unphilosophical, visceral, not reflective at all. Just loving to live and loving to play. I used to play a lot of sports and I used to love to do that and just not having concerns for any money worries or girlfriend worries or "making it" worries, success worries or any of that type of thing that I think can be debilitating. About sophomore year at college I just felt there was more pressure on me. I had pressure from my mother especially, because I was the first one in the family to go to college and I felt pressure to succeed. I didn't feel it as much in high school. I never really was a student in high school.

In high school most of my life was sports, really. I played every sport I could. It wasn't that I was a big high school athlete, I wasn't; I was mostly with the neighborhood kids. Reading sports books took up a lot of my interest. I don't think I ever read any poetry before I got into college. I really wasn't a well-read high school kid. But I tried to make up for it later cause I felt a lack within myself and wanted to make up for it. I wanted to read these things. My parents had just saved for years and years and years to get me into a good Catholic college, boarding school. It was their decision more than anything, especially my mother . It probably came from the lack she had, growing up with seven brothers and sisters and poor and I think I was a projection of her in a lot of ways. Especially at that time, Irish-Catholic mothers wanted their sons to succeed. Priest, doctor, that type of thing. And in the fifties parents would be much more insistent on their children going to school because they saw the value of it sociologically, because of their poor social strata.

In college there were a lot of kids I met that were rich and had money and I felt that I wasn't in their league. Sophomore year at college, I remember I felt so unhappy. I was miserable. I didn't take any of my final exams and left school. The whole summer between my sophomore and junior year I couldn't even work, I didn't even want to work. I used to work for construction companies and things like that in the summer but I didn't. But things seemed to get better, and junior and senior years were much happier for me.

In graduate school it was very strenuous because the philosophy Ph.D. program was very tough, the readings were tough and it was very long and arduous. There was a lot of pressure, the exams, especially the comprehensive exams, all the reading lists, it was a tremendous amount of work. I was thirty-three when I started; I was one of the older ones because I had a full-time job and was married. I wanted to get the terminal degree. I had applied to four year schools and got accepted for one-year contracts,but I got the position here and I liked the situation here. There wasn't any pressure to publish even though I did publish something. I liked the students, I liked the atmosphere, and I really think I teach well and I like the idea tht I could do this without any undue pressures. I think I give a lot to it. I have taught here full-time close to thirteen or fourteen years.

I can remember the first time I walked into my first high school class there were forty-five kids in a Latin II class and I was so scared it was unbelievable. In that school I had about 250 students a day and I was teaching thirty hours a week. When I came here, there's this twelve hours and I said, "What's that?--that's just the afternoon, where's the morning? What'll I do in the morning?" I couldn't believe it. If I hadn't been at that high school and this guy hadn't been here and knew me, I probably never would have ended up at a community college.

I think teaching is an art, not a skill. And I think that the true teacher, the really great teacher, is someone like a poet who has subjective experiences, he really is alone in a sense. I had at college a teacher of literature. I never appreciated poetry till I had this fellow as a teacher. Probably the best teacher I had, a little man who taught a course in Victorian Literature. I took it at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was a course a lot of football players took and fell asleep in the back row. But this guy was a great teacher. He just had a B.A. He lived with his mother and of course the kids used to mock him. I think he had more to say than anyone I heard. When he talked about Arnold and Tennyson and Browning, he made them come alive. He could explain in full clarity their art. He was a very private man. But he made public their greatness, so that's all I cared about.

Here at the community college I teach every subject in the universe. I teach philosophy, logic, German and math. But I came here to teach philosophy. I ended up teaching German and math also. This semester I'm teaching two math courses and I'm teaching Introduction to Philosophy and logic. In the evening I teach Latin. It's a very hybrid department. In fact I've really been the only one who's ever taught philosophy and logic.

I was a department chairman for maybe five years and then I just had had it, I didn't want to do it anymore, it wasn't worth it for the one course. Frankly, a lot of people went into department chairmanships because it was a vehicle to get promoted. There was no money for a department chairman. What you did was you served in this capacity and it put you in good stead when you came up for evaluation. And so I did get promoted. I stayed for a number of years. I wanted to be in charge of my own fate, but after a while I wanted to get back to full-time teaching.

I think my forte was in teaching. I think it always has been. I guess I've always had more appeal to the very bright students. I've been known as a rigid teacher. I felt that writing and reading and thinking skills had become diluted and I could really help people in this area. I feel I could be of service to the student who is bright, but even the student who's willing to work hard, who has some latent ability, and will really give me a lot of work. I like analysis, I like patterns of thinking, I like the idea of running an argument from one thing to another. I hope to share that with the students so that they can feel an intellectual achievement when they get out of here. Too many of our graduates don't have reading and writing skills that are anywhere near what they should be to get a piece of paper out of here . I think I'm thinking of the students too.

Unfortunately, like with everyone else in the sixties and the early seventies, I think I diluted my grading process and everything else. I've changed, I've gone back again. I think a final exam is important, where they have to be able to take a compendium of material and put it into an intelligent form and they have to be responsible for a semester's work. In a way every student should feel a little bit over their head. I think it's ridiculous to be in a course in which you know everything, in which you can pick it up on your own. There should be some sort of difficulty, otherwise I wonder why the person is in the course. I think the purpose of education is what Cardinal Newman said it was --the cultivation of the intellect. I believe in a broad, liberal education. I believe that to be educated one should have mathematics, philosophy, history, at least one of the sciences, maybe two. I think that specialization should come later. I'm at a community college, in which many kids come in here just for typing or secretarial work or allied health or something-- I'm not talking about those students. I'm talking about the students in the liberal arts area . I feel that I can help community college students because I don't think people that have this philosophy of education are that predominant in community colleges.

Over the years I took more cognizance of the fact that I was dealing with individuals who had problems, personal problems. A lot of community college kids have personal problems, like a lot of other people. I think I really did scare the kids too much when I originally started out. I think I was too rigid and I didn't try to reach them in as humane a way as I could. I think I've mellowed. And I think I should have. And I guess that the main thing that made me change was going to graduate school. I mainly felt, "Gee, am I really like one of those bastards, the way they act towards me?" I sat in classes and I knew the guys didn't give a damn whether I was there or not. And that made me think, maybe that's the same attitude that I have toward students too. Maybe I don't give a damn for them. I think that helped me change. Some of them had the ability I had but didn't have the benefits.

A lot of people have said that they were initially afraid to ask me any questions because I scared them. But I didn't become overpowering to them in the long run. I had a lot of students say having me as a teacher has changed their lives. I don't think they had had anybody who had really challenged them intellectually. One woman took this course, Methods of Reasoning, and it really was a course that turned her around. She ended up taking her college boards and got 710 on the English and just graduated from Vassar. So that was a success story. I've had some people get a master's in philosophy.

I got a full professorship here before I got the Ph.D. The Ph.D. has not helped me as far as money's concerned. It's done nothing as far as that's concerned. It's hard to make a living on the salary I make, with kids, a house.

My wife was a public health visiting nurse. She stopped working when we got married. And now she's for the first time working. I had a very traditional ideal when you get married, me Tarzan--you Jane type of thing. You see a lot of John Wayne movies and you think that this is the way life should be. I've changed a lot in that regard too.

When I got my Ph.D., I wanted to make it as big of a thing as I could; in my own mind it was a big event. I worked eight years for it, I was proud of it. I didn't sense any great change in the faculty, though. I think that people, maybe I'm wrong about that, a lot of people wished they'd had it and wished they'd worked for it. How much is the Ph.D. needed or is it valuable? That's really the question. And the answer is, I don't think it's valuable at all. And I've just seen too many Ph.D.'s who are absolutely horrible. I think, though, you have to have requirements, don't get me wrong. I think you ought to have a master's in the subject area in which you teach. The Ph.D.-- I wanted to feel that I could go as far as I could in that field. I would always otherwise have felt a little bit of a lack. Whoever knows what the cause of that was, but that's how I felt. And two, I did want a ticket out of here . That hasn't evolved but as a matter of fact it has helped in situations outside of this college. The Ph.D. has helped, in another position, teaching an evening course where they hired a Ph.D. and they wouldn't take anyone else.

I have standards, there's a lot of reading, a lot of work to be done. Some are willing to work. If I have kids who really work, I think very few wouldn't succeed in some sense. In logic I've had some who didn't succeed and they took the course over again. I've got one woman who had seven children here. I thought I scared the hell out of her. She told me later, "You were just nothing but a pussycat." I do get angry at students. You see, I don't require attendance in class, I don't feel like I should. But I get angry at students when they show up once a week or twice a week. They're getting practically a free education here, I tell them, I say, "I put a lot of time into my work and I'm wasting my time with you people. You show up once a week, take every Friday off, what a waste." That angers me. I feel badly; I regret that they're doing that.

I have a lot of university friends in the philosophy department; I wouldn't want to be in their position for anything. I feel in some ways I've got the best of all possible worlds. I do have the terminal degree, I feel like I've achieved that, but yet I don't have to go through this publish or perish bit in which every six months I have to put out something that's in a journal of philosophy. I published something, but I don't have to publish and get rejections and go through all that . These people spend their whole life trying to publish something.

Division and department chairman, I had never tried it and it was a challenge. But it was terrible, terrible. Sitting in a room of these meetings for hours and saying nothing, couldn't stand it. I mean, we just had these meetings over and over again that meant nothing. Nothing was ever done, it was just a lot of educational jargon, things called behavioral objectives and biting the bullet. And those phrases repeated every Friday again and again and I had no idea what context they were used in. In fact, there was one meeting in which I sat there for an hour and a half and I knew I hadn't understood one sentence that was said the whole hour and a half. I really started to think that I was losing my mind. And I walked out and this guy, he grabbed me by the shoulder and this saved my sanity forever, he looked at me and said, "Did you understand one damn thing that was said in there?" I said, "Whew, what a relief. I thought it was me." And a lot of the paperwork. I didn't get pleasure out of it. I just knew I couldn't stand doing those things.

I really do think teaching is a noble profession, though. I mean what could be more noble than trying to reach another mind? And try to have students appreciate the arts? Especially when they've never encountered it. That's why it's noble, it's spirit from one to another speaking. You're imbuing them with a spirit of something they never had before and a love of something they'd never had before. And that to me is noble.

I don't think you can really separate the subject from the subject taught. I guess what I'm trying to say is, when I'm reading Sartre, for instance, I can almost feel like the character. You know, he's there, alone at the station at the end, he and his mistress are out and he has this sense of contingency about everything. I can get inside him. I think that good literature can evoke responses in all people who are sensitive. Because maybe they've all felt that a little bit in their own lives. And I'm just trying to bring that alive. I think the intellectual level of our culture means something. And I'm not talking about intellectual superiority either. But I think it's important for people to have gone through college, to have a good education, to have this liberal arts background. I think it's important to them as persons. It's going to have practical consequences too. I think it's good for them. Makes a better overall person both intellectually and emotionally.

I think there are reasons why people are the way they are, through their environment. I know that. If the only thing a kid has ever heard is "Pass the beer, you bum" in his household, he could do it, but it's going to be harder for him to progress. But then you do get to a point where you give them every break you can and it's up to them. It's a two-way street. You have to appreciate their backgrounds, there's no question about that. I think it's very hard to know where anybody's coming from. You do the best you can, I don't know exactly all the hang-ups people have, the problems they have or the stresses they have, all the things which are impediments of their progressing, I don't know all those things. I can impart something to them that they can appreciate and I give them every break and then it's up to them to reciprocate. You work the best you can under those conditions. I visited a friend who works at the university . He describes his students: about a third of them are really good and then there's another third that's grayish, and then there's another third who don't belong there. I think it's sort of the same way for me. I think there's a difference in degree, maybe, but not of kind. Their social habits are different but not their intellectual ways. I don't think there's that much difference as far as their abilities are concerned.

I guess I'm lonely a lot of times, yeah. But I think that's part of the human condition in a lot of ways. I think if you're profound at all you realize how lonely life is, I think it's part of the problems everyone has. People get divorced, people lose friendships. It's very difficult.

I'd like to spend some time sitting down with a book because I think I could write something. My dissertation was written for my mentors, okay. I'd like to work on something to make philosophy easier for students, or get into an analysis that would be useful for community college students. The emphasis here is is on teaching, I like that part of it. I like the idea I'm at a teaching institution, not a research institution. I'll have to admit that I wish sometimes I could teach some of the more advanced courses, sometimes I wish I could teach some graduate students; but again, you can't have an ideal situation. You've got to be practical about it. I can supplement that myself by doing some teaching elsewhere if I want to. I've got the degrees, I know enough people, I can do that. It's a good faculty, the people are nice, a good group of people.

I don't think I'll ever move again. Something might come up, but I don't think so. I don't think I'll ever buy a home again, I don't think my wife and I want to go through that hassle of moving. I used to think when I finally got the Ph.D.all these doors were going to open. What happened when I finally got the Ph.D. is that doors were being closed on Ph.D.'s. You know, the supply and demand of education is so bad today, you just can't get jobs. So anybody who can get tenure should try to keep their job. When I got out of college, they had people from IBM and the telephone company coming to the college looking for you. Nobody looks for you any more. You take each day, and you say I'm given this situation which is in a sense accidental, and each day you make the most out of what you can: yourself, your students, the ability to get some satisfaction out of your work, you just do the best you can realizing again that nothing is perfect. You work, you choose within the determined situation. So I guess I'm a stoic.

I think committees are just a waste. I spend most of my time in my teaching, and with my students. I told my wife this a couple of years ago. I made a decision not to spend a long time on these extra meetings. At this stage I want to get involved, if I have any free time, in writing. You know, just keep a low profile. Play it cool, don't get too emotionally involved, there's just less hassle. I go in, I teach my courses, I get out and then I do my own thing on the side. That's what it's come down to. It's always been rush, rush, rush and the logistics of the place have always been terrible. When I'm in the classroom I forget about the low profile. When I am in that classroom I get caught up in the subject area and I am myself. When I am out of the classroom , then I play a low profile. But it doesn't affect me at all in the classroom.

I guess I'm fortunate. I'm there quite a long time during the day with students, with my preparing or doing other things. I take the job seriously. And I like to do a good job. I think I do a good job. We've bought a lovely home here, my kids have a nice place, my wife loves the home, we are in a community we find we like, I've got a job that's not a pressure job.

I feel that if you take the right courses at a community college, you can get as good an education in the first two years of college as you can get at a four year college, you really can. You can't get the atmosphere, but you've got some good teachers over there who try hard, who know their subject matter well, who can really help. But if you really asked me, if I was out in a crowd, how you really feel when someone says to you-- on a Saturday evening and I'm out with my wife--"Where do you work, what do you teach?" "I teach at the community college," I guess there's almost a gut level thing where I'm really not proud to say it. I guess I am not proud to say it because I know how most people think about community colleges, this is a second rate institution. And here I am, you worked hard for a Ph.D. and you got there but you're only at a community college. If I was more authentic, I would say it doesn't matter what they think. But it does matter to me, what people think. It would be better, where do you teach, I teach at the university. I mean, certainly the people would say, "Oh God, that's where they have technical courses, or other humpty-dumpty things." That's the attitude people have toward it. I know I am as good as anybody. And it's only human to want to think other people respect you. But that's a small thing to lose. That's not a big thing, it's a little factor. Once in a while I think about it; but again, I've got people who taught me in my doctoral program who've been in a hassle about tenure, who have got uptight about the situation over there about publishing, who make six thousand dollars less than I do and are in a terrible situation.

In a lot of ways we can play the game here, but I think our situation is probably less political than most places I know. I don't hear myself disparaging the work. What I'm disparaging is the sense that you get rewarded for good work and the guys who don't do good work don't get rewarded, but I don't think there's any connection there. I think sometimes it works out that way, but a lot of times it's just luck. The two highest paid people we have are women, because they are women. Not because they are good. One of them is good and one of them is bad. I think a lot of it is just the way the world is.

Bertrand Russell probably says it best of all: he says we're all on a ship. Once you admit that you don't have the last word, you grow up. Death has the last word. And there are a lot of other things before death that have the last word too. What else have we got but the fact that we are all in the same boat? You try to get some love in your life, with the people you are close to, and you try to give. And those passers-by in life that you see, you try to give them some sympathy and help. In this short life, what else is there?

There's probably a hell of a lot more. Absolutely. Like a lot of conversations, we probably hide things we don't even know we're hiding . Probably repressing things right now, we all play those games with urselves, okay. Because I've got to be a little bit political when I do this, you know, we all tend to want to keep things to ourselves for whatever reason.

It's almost like working for myself. Nobody bothers me at the college. I don't really report to anybody. I go in and do my own thing in the classroom. I think I am pretty damn lucky to work over there. I really do. I've had a lot of jobs in my ife, I mean I've sold, I've been a stock broker, I've been a salesman, systems analyst, I've worked in business before in a lot of different areas. Nothing's going to give me the beautific vision. So I mean I have to be human about it and say , what's gonna satisfy the most, given all the contingent conditions of life? How is it going to be bearable to live every day? This is the most bearable for me at this juncture. And I think I can help, I think this is where I'm best for other people too.

Commentary

As a teacher of music, Brenner bridges the division between a teacher of a performing art and a teacher of the humanities. Music, by the definition that was developed within the legislation establishing the National Endowment for the Humanities, is considered one of the humanities (Yarrington 1980, p. 10). The performing arts aspects of the music Brenner teaches serves to highlight rather than detract from the issues inherent in the work of humanities teachers.

Brenner teaches voice, music literature, and choral singing. The basic structural fact with which he had to learn to contend as a community college teacher was that as a teacher in a two-year school he did not have students long enough to develop their talent. The gap between his own musical experience, talent, and knowledge, and that of his students is enormous, and is broadened by the difference in goals his students have in music and his own commitment to music. Brenner grew up in and was trained in a musical tradition in which Johann Sebastian Bach is the fountainhead; his work in the community college is a process of compromise with that tradition.

But Brenner makes that compromise without a sense of self-diminution or disrespect for his students. Similar to teachers of English who complain that their students cannot write or read , Brenner acknowledges that many of his students do not know a whole note from a rest. Yet he faced the realities of the structure in which he worked, and developed course content and methodology that accommodated his students and what they wanted in music as well as what he knew was important in music.

He approaches his work with a sense of excellence and commitment, yet he is working in a structure which is operating against him. Enrollment in his courses and in other courses in his department is dropping. The number of sections is being reduced. There is a threat that teaching in the evening division which, up until this point, has always been done for extra compensation, will have to become a part of his regular work load. As he sees his colleagues either retiring or dying and not being replaced, he begins to wonder if the college would replace him were he to leave. That thought for anyone who takes his work as seriously as Brenner does is enervating.

The fact is that not only are humanities teachers not being replaced but they are increasingly being asked to serve as a sort of utility infielder. In the face of threats of "reduction in force," it has become a standard and seemingly sympathetic option to ask faculty to "retool" themselves and teach in areas for which they were not originally prepared. On the surface the choice between holding a job no matter what the subject area and holding on to your field seems clearcut. However, the injury to dignity that occurs when faculty members are told that the field that they have spent years of preparation in and which reflects a major part of how they identify themselves can no longer warrant being taught is not readily measurable, but it does represent a loss of something vital to the person. Brenner does not face being told to prepare to teach something outside of the field of music, but he imagines what it would be like to have to teach five sections of introductory voice or piano, and we can feel in his words a sense of real quandary: what has it all been about if that is where his career will lead?

On a day-to-day basis Brenner goes about his work with a sense of excellence and dedication. It is only on the reflection asked for in the interview process that a certain yearning comes to the surface in what he says and thinks. He wonders aloud what it means to teach in a college where a sheet metal course has a place equivalent to, if not above, that of music. Faced with the pressure of declining enrollments, he and his colleagues who have always developed a program for people who will transfer to four-year colleges must now consider developing commercial and career programs in music. For the sake of survival they think about programs that might prepare people to run music shops, or work in sound studios in recording laboratories. They may have to rethink their concept of what music is and what it is supposed to do in the scheme of things. After all, he says, "We are not a conservatory."

Such reflections move him to think back to his dreams of a doctorate in vocal music and what teaching in a four-year college might be like. As is the case with other community college teachers in other fields, there are aspects of teaching in the community college that seem less pressured, less competitive, and less hierarchial than seems to them to be the case in four-year colleges. But the four-year college still seems to be a dream, perhaps something to do at the close of a career before one retires. Brenner tells the story of having gone to a workshop of professional choral directors and being impressed with the possibilities if only people were willing to take the risk. The result is that Brenner feels that his yearnings, his sense of something that is not quite right in the quality of his work, is his own responsibility; that if he had the individual courage he could do something about it. Indeed, in assessing the problems facing the humanities in community colleges, the official AACJC publication Strengthening the Humanities in Community Colleges looks to the faculty to maintain and resurrect the humanities.

But it is clear from Brenner's profile that the forces operating on his teaching are forces built into the structure of his institution. These social and economic forces provide the context for his teaching and far outweigh his and his colleagues' individual efforts. They can fight to hold on to the humanities in community colleges and to a traditional notion of the meaning of music. But the structure works against them, and the press to consider making the teaching of music fit a commercial model is very strong. It is difficult to find evidence in the interviews that the community college offers support for a resistance to that press. Instead the rewards seem to lie in the area of being innovative about new career programs in music that will tap into the marketplace of the surrounding area, prepare students for jobs, and force faculty to rethink what music should be in the community college. It is true that, as Brenner says, the community college is not a conservatory; it also appears that the community college will not be a conservative institution in the sense of offering some resistance to the helter-skelter slide toward making every program a "career" program without thinking about what might be lost in the bargain.

Cynthia Jamison is teaching across the country in New York State at a community college that has a history as a technical school and a current emphasis on trades and technology. In her institution courses in psychology and history are service courses to the basic technological programs in the school. She has a love for medieval history, and a sense for the relevance of irrelevance. She is not interested in preparing people for careers, only in having them learn to think, so that once they make a living they will be able to get some enjoyment from life.

The medieval history course is her passion and she does what is necessary in the institution to hang on to it. She teaches psychology because when the position came open she was the person on the faculty whose background seemed most appropriate to the need. She teaches the course by the book, and puts an enormous amount of energy into making the multiple-choice exams (which her department seems to favor) fair to the students. But she would never offer a multiple-choice exam in the medieval history course she loves. She seems to know without saying it that no matter how careful she is in the construction of multiple choice tests, they cannot get at the essence of a student's understanding or help carry that understanding any further.

Sometimes she feels as though she is talking to a wall when she tries to get her students to be thoughtful about the psychological ideas she is teaching. She will not play the role of humanistic messiah for technological students. But twice in her career she has faced threats of hostility in the form of complaints by male students who say that if they don't get a good grade from her they will burn her house down. Is it possible that teachers who are commited to asking their students to think, to not just grub for the grade that will get them the certificate that supposedly will get them the job, run the risk of verbal and even physical abuse from a student who shares none of the notions of the importance of thoughtfulness and intellectual curiosity which are usually assumed when teacher and students work together? But like Nancy Warren, Jamison also sees beneath the exteriors that her students present and recognizes the enormous reservoir of decency, good will, and willingness to learn that characterizes her students despite the fact that they do not quite know what they are doing in her classes.

Cynthia Jamison was hired by the college because they were intrigued by her elite private school, liberal-arts background. The fact is that though they had the good sense to hire her, because she clearly thinks deeply and clearly about anything she lets her mind touch, the institution,it seems to us although perhaps not to Jamison, does not use her to its best advantage. She has to struggle to keep the medieval history course on the books and offered once a year. She is used like a utility infielder to teach psychology, and before that English, when her intelligence, her background, and her ability to work best with a subject is in the field of history. They tie her down to departmental exams, departmental texts, and multiple-choice exams . All the while the college is getting only a small proportion of her best self. Their concern for numbers and for the block curriculum that the technological programs seem to require have isolated and put in a small corner a person who thinks deeply about what medieval history means and could mean for her students.

Timothy Bailey is the utility infielder par excellence in the humanities. He was hired to teach philosophy and he also teaches Latin, German, and finally mathematics. After trying a series of jobs in business, he turned to teaching because he realized that, more than anything else, he liked to study and learn. His high school teaching led him to a part-time teaching position in the community college and then to a full-time position. He presents the almost stereotypical view of a high school teacher initially amazed by the reduction in teaching load when he came to teach in the community college full-time.

At the heart of his profile are two themes: his deep respect for ideas and learning and the pervasive feeling of disappointment that getting his Ph.D. did not lead to more than teaching in a community college. The two themes interact. His deep respect for learning, his sense of teaching as an art, his sensitivity --reflected, for example, in his respect for a college teacher who had very little in the way of formal degrees but who of all his teachers cut to the core of what literature was about-- all combine to make him a somewhat isolated teacher in the community college. He is both in and apart from the college. He respects what it can do for students, but he is separated from the majority of the students whom the college serves. He, like Cynthia Jamison , has developed a sense of humor that allows him to feel the absurdity of administrative jargon and management techniques developed for industry and applied to a college in the name of efficiency.

He pursued a Ph.D. part-time while working full-time. He weathered severe family crises so that he could move out of community college teaching into a four-year school. But by the time he got his degree, the academic market place in philosophy had all but disappeared. He was faced with the option of taking one-year appointments with little prospect of security and giving up his tenured and senior position in the community college. He chose to stay where he was.

The choice left him with a feeling of having worked as hard as he could work-- and still he was teaching in "just a community college." He protests too much about how he has the best of both worlds: a college position and no pressure to publish. Ironically he has published his dissertation and could publish more, but there is no incentive for him to do so in the community college. He emanates a sense of pessimism and yet his Bertrand Russell vision of us all being on the boat together has such a deep sense of humility, perspective, and understanding, that his pessimism seems framed by love.

What does it all add up to? The diminishing position of the humanities in community colleges and the ambiguity with which the Ph.D. is treated and Timothy Bailey's personal history all result in the college getting about fifty percent of Timothy Bailey. He keeps a low profile, leaves the college after his teaching, and looks for additional ways to use the reservoir of intelligence, education, and talent that is his.

The community college in its press for career education, in molding its curriculum toward training for jobs, is not all that different from four-year schools and universities. One of our participants pointed out that the University of Chicago has been doing career education from the beginning-- only the careers have been in the law, medicine, social work, and other areas more closely associated with professionalism, higher education, and the middle class (Bledstern 1978). But in the four-year colleges and universities the balance between education for jobs and education for living has been maintained to a greater degree than it has in the community college. By their sense of mission, history, and design, four-year colleges and universities maintain a sense of "higher education" which includes more than education for jobs. Community colleges, however, in their competition to survive, have evidenced a willingness to play almost completely to the marketplace, and to an unspoken bias about what is suitable education for people of the working and lower middle class who tend to come to community colleges.

Community colleges have become so deeply embedded in their struggle to flourish that they have forgotten that one of the purposes of education is to allow students to be critical and to assess values in their society. Students may come to the community college because of the promise of career training. The colleges seem to forget that it is a legitimate and necessary aim of any institution which calls itself a "college" to ask the question, "Jobs for what, to what end, why?"

The teachers of the humanities who attempt to perform that function in the community colleges have a difficult role. They are swimming against the current; there is little extrinsic reward for doing so if the institution does not share an appreciation of the questions they are asking. Their students find themselves in a fragmented world in which the questions their humanities teachers are trying to get them to think about seem irrelevant to why they came to the community college in the first place. Sometimes the reaction of students caught in this bifurcated world is anger, often it is apathy. Sometimes the spark catches and there is a sense of deep appreciation for an idea and a sense in their eyes of "this is what college is supposed to be like."

In addition to contending with the apathy of many of their students, humanities faculty increasingly live with a sense that they are dispensible in the college. Under the guise of protecting their jobs they are asked to become pedagogical utility infielders: teach whatever needs to be taught that is somehow related to their background. On the surface this seems like a wise and humane approach on the part of administrations to the problems of numbers and finances. But it is an essentially demeaning and destructive policy. It may say that -- unlike other areas of the technologies and career education-- background, experience, deep knowing, and familiarity are not important to the teaching of the humanities. Anyone can do it who has the inclination to protect his or her job. It is a continuation of an essentially anti-intellectual strain in the community college that was present from its inception when early advocates stressed the notion of separating research from teaching and separating the lower division (with its large number of students) from the upper division where students began to specialize (Eells 1931). By participating in the seemingly humane "retooling" policy rather than fighting it--which is understandable given what is at stake-- faculty contribute to the diminution of the importance of the humanities and cut themselves off from what has been important to them in their lives. Like Cynthia Jamison, they teach four sections of a subject they may have little preparation for in order to teach the one subject they love .

By refusing to play the role of utility infielder, faculty might confront the notion that lies behind it. The problem with that recommendation is that it once again makes the individual faculty member responsible for confronting a systemic, social and organizational force. That confrontation cannot be successful, and although it may salvage the sense of identity of an individual humanities teacher, it will do little for the humanities in community colleges.

The response to the issue must be on a systemic level. The federal government must change their policy of primarily funding vocational programs in community colleges. Vocational programs must be conceptualized, as one of our participants said, with a more complete sense of what education must be: it can not only be training for a job, it must also be education for a sense of that job in the larger social context. Community colleges must confront their pursuit of students through the promise of job training. They will temporarily get the numbers depending on the economic situation in the country. But when the economic situation turns, job training that does not include a sense of a larger context will be dead-end training for their students. Over and over again we heard from vocational faculty that the student who can read and express his thoughts in writing is the student that will not only get the job but will have some sense of opportunity and power in the job. The irony of the work of humanities teachers in community colleges is that they seem to hold the key to a real sense of power and opportunity for the students who come to community colleges seeking job preparation. But very few colleges seem to recognize that. The notion appears repeatedly in our interviews, paradoxically most often among our vocational teachers whom we shall discuss in a later chapter. The role of humanities teachers is steadily decreased in the community college, and the type of thinking that the humanities ask students to do is relegated to the background. The cost is high for students, humanities faculty, and for the community college movement itself which seems willing to buy into a notion of "postsecondary education." This indicator in our language tells us that community colleges are themselves in danger of losing a notion of what higher education is and what it is supposed to be. Humanities faculty are asked to maintain a tradition that would allow a reasonable synthesis of the humanities and career education to occur in community colleges. It can be seen from the profiles presented in this chapter that individual efforts are not enough.

Chapter Five

Living with Compromise: The Work of Math and Science Teachers

Introduction to the Profiles

Understanding the nature of the work of community college math and science faculty is central to understanding the potential that community colleges have for offering equitable educational opportunity to their students. The sciences and mathematics are tied, as perhaps no other collegiate subjects, to power and opportunity in our society, to moving up in the social hierarchy. Taking courses in science and mathematics connects the everyday life of community college students to the ideology of progress stemming from the Enlightenment. Community colleges themselves, although the motives of their early advocates may have been quite different, took on the mantle of progressivism in the 1950s and 1960s. They were seen as institutions which would play a significant role in the democratization of education in the United States (Medsker 1960, p.20). They would provide educational opportunity to those to whom it had been denied heretofore, and they would remedy past inequities in educational opportunity and outcome. They would work for the betterment of society through their educational efforts. Faculty who taught the sciences and mathematics would ideally be at the center of this type of progressive energy.

In the following faculty profiles, we first present two chemistry teachers-- one teaching in a small community college in a rural setting in New York State, and the other in a larger community college in a suburban industrialized area of California. Then we present two profiles and one vignette of mathematics teachers. The first teaches in a suburban town in Massachusetts, the second in a community college in an urban area in Massachusetts, and the third in a large community college in a well-to-do suburban area in California. These five faculty teaching in widely diverse settings in three different states share an identity with academic fields intimately associated with notions of progress and positivism. They were all prepared in an intellectual tradition which posits a notion of universal truth which can be approached through a rational methodology. There is a shared conviction in that tradition that if the rational methodology is pursued steadfastly, progress can be made in the entire sphere of human knowledge. Furthermore, that knowledge is logically arranged and cumulative and each generation builds its knowledge on the platform provided by the previous generation. Finally, that knowledge will lead to progress in human welfare.

In the pursuit of that knowledge, the surest access is provided through the language of mathematics and the physical sciences (Berlin 1982, pp. 80-83).

The profiles that follow reflect the complexity of carrying out those positivist ideals within the community college context. They reveal the intertwinings of structural factors unique to community colleges, social forces of race, class, and gender, and individual histories which affect the progressive assumptions underlying the work of mathematics and science faculty.

Profile

JESUS LOPEZ

(Jesus Lopez, in his thirties, teaches chemistry in a California community college. He was interviewed at his college in the summer of 1981.)

I was born in Juarez, Mexico. Our family was originally in the United States during the depression era. The death of my grandfather kind of moved our family back to Mexico where they had the family support. About the time that I was born the family was in the process of migrating back up north and coming back into the United States. We moved initially to Los Angeles and then a year or so later moved to Long Beach . I guess my mother and father were typical of their generation in terms of Mexican Americans, their minimal education. They have sixth and eighth grade educations and for me to move out into the academics was a major accomplishment. I went to public schools. I didn't know English when I first came here so I ended up sort of piecing it together and trying to make it through school while learning English.

My father worked in a laundry as a laundry worker. He ran the large washing machines. He now works in a food-packing company. My mother worked as a domestic, part-time. Once we were all old enough to be in school she would work during the school hours and when we were home she'd be through work.

The first few years were sort of bewildering in that the area we moved to did not have very many other Mexican families. I ended up being in situations where I was maybe the only Mexican in the classroom or one of two or three. I remember that sometimes was a problem trying to figure out where in the world all of the people with my background, my culture, had gone to. Suddenly you're among all these Japanese because the area we moved into was a predominantly Japanese community. As a result I ended up throughout my school life having most of my friends , at least ninety percent of them, being Japanese. That was the group that I felt more akin to, so much so that after a while people just assumed that I was Japanese . I had situations when I went to their homes, their parents would speak to me in Japanese and would wonder about halfway through the conversation why I hadn't responded. The Japanese were an adopted peer group for me, because of the situation that I didn't have other Mexicans in the community that I could associate with.

My mother spoke English, not super-fluently. She had spent the first twelve years of her life in Kansas. My grandparents worked for the railroads. She pretty much served as my interpreter. The way it worked was I would go and play with someone. They would tell me something. I would remember it, run back to her, repeat it. She would tell me what it meant in Spanish, give me a proper reply in English , which I would then run back with. It probably was about two or three months this went on. It was constant, this scurrying back and forth. She said it got to the point where eventually after about a several month period the frequency of carrying these messages back and forth started to decrease until finally I stopped coming to her at all, at which point she figured I must be communicating.

In my childhood we spoke Spanish. As I grew older I gravitated towards English, began to speak half and half, eventually speaking predominantly English in the home but the parents responding in Spanish. We've gotten to the point now where we just feel more comfortable with English, but it changes when we travel to Mexico to visit relatives. It doesn't take very long to switch back so that Spanish is natural and the English gets pushed to the background.

For me school was a genuine pleasure. I found that I did enjoy the academics whatever it might be -- the reading, the writing, the arithmetic. I found that that did give me a certain amount of inner satisfaction and pleasure, to be able to do them. I came to the realization that school meant something more than just a place where you had to go to, but rather a place where I could extend myself beyond the surroundings that I had grown up with, beyond the surroundings that I saw. Some of our family were being forced to go to work because they just didn't want to go to school. School was a game I was good at, that I enjoyed playing. It really didn't become a serious enterprise till I got to high school. Junior year in high school it began. I began to realize all of the ramifications of being successful educationally . Up to that time I did it because I enjoyed it. I have no one in my immediate family that I can turn to for guidance and counseling in these areas. It's highly unlikely that I'm going to meet someone who maybe shares my background that can counsel me. I guess up to that point I wasn't convinced that I had the ability to do well. I didn't have any problems carrying a fairly rigorous academic program in my senior year, taking physics and chemistry and advanced math and honors humanities course and college prep English and playing football. I felt I had the ability . All I needed to do was to apply myself toward that goal.

I had one negative experience that I can remember in terms of someone challenging my ability. The counselors would come from the high schools to counsel ninth graders and try to help you plan your program. By this time I had already decided that I was going to be a chemist. I was going to get a Ph.D. in chemistry. I had signed up for as rigorous a program as I could in terms of math and science for the following fall. We planned our programs, submitted them, the counselors came down and we had a counseling session. The particular counselor I had looked at my program and just said, "I don't think you can handle this program. It's too rigorous. You're not going to be successful. Why don't you drop one of the sciences, the biology course, and I think you'll have your hands full with just the math. Take something else in its place." His recommendations were either wood shop, auto mechanics, or one of the vocational classes. As a result we had a confrontation about what I wanted to do and what I felt my abilities were and my past success in at least the junior high level programs. I'd always taken science and math courses and I hadn't ever gotten anything less than an A in a math or science course. The B's I got in school were usually in English or social science. So I said, "I don't see why I wouldn't be able to perform well. I haven't had any trouble yet." And so we had a discussion about that and I ended up spending the year in study hall because I wouldn't take the shop class. I told him I didn't want any shop classes. I wasn't interested in shop classes. He said I had to have so many units or I had to have so many classes. He said, "If you're not going to take a shop class, I'm not going to let you take biology; the only alternative you have is to spend your time in a study hall." I'd gotten to the point I just became frustrated with him. I said, "Fine. Just put me in a study hall." So I did spend a year in a study hall.

I decided that that one counselor was not going to be helpful at all. He'd already decided what I was going to do. As far as he was concerned Mexicans could do a lot of shop work and that was it. They certainly were not college material . I knew that I was always going to fight the same battles with him, that is, he was going to try to give me wood shop or auto mechanics and I was always going to try to take the sciences. At that point I didn't really know the other side in terms of parental pressures or pressures that you could bring from the outside into a school system. I didn't know that I didn't have to take the courses he gave me because I could tell my parents. My parents could bring pressures to bear that would essentially give me what I wanted regardless of what he said. I wasn't aware of that. As far as I was concerned he was in the position of authority. As far as I could perceive there wasn't anyone else that could challenge him. So the alternative was to find another counselor within the system.

Fortunately the next year I went to another counselor who at least looked at my academic record and said, "I don't see why you can't do this. Certainly grades don't seem to be a problem." He said, "Go ahead, if you want to try it, go ahead and try it." I remained with that counselor for the rest of the high school experience. But that's the only negative experience that I had at the school at all. Everything else was for me very positive.

My high school courses were labeled general high school English, and then there was college prep English. It didn't take me too long to know that of the two categories the college prep was the preferred one if you wanted to go on to college. Even getting people to seriously consider you college material was greatly diminished if you didn't get into those courses, so after my one experience I soon learned not only did I have to make sure that I took the proper math and science courses for my goals but also that they were college prep courses. Not just math but it would have to be college prep math. Not just social studies but it would have to be college prep social studies. I quickly became aware of the fact that that prefix in front of your courses had a lot to do with what ultimately happened to you. I began to notice that the bulk of the people that I met in the geometry class, the English, and the social science classes were all taking pretty much the same courses. The bulk of the people that I met in study hall were not in those classes and as I talked to them I asked them what they were taking. They would always say, "Well, I'm taking general social studies, I'm taking general English, I'm taking general math." I looked at that and I said, O.K, I definitely want to go to college so I'd better make sure that I get all the ones that are preparing me for college rather than this other category that they seem to lump as "general." So for the eleventh grade when I signed up as I looked at the courses I made sure they were college prep courses. The social studies courses and the English courses I had to make sure that I got put in the ones labeled college prep if they were to serve my goals. By that time I had come to the realization that there definitely were two populations at our high school: the general population, which for the most part everyone talked about in terms of, well, they'll never go to college regardless of what their abilities happened to be; and the college prep course which everyone conceived that they were going to college, again, regardless of their abilities. It was important that I be identified with the college prep group rather than the other.

Our school had a population of three thousand. My graduating class was a little under a thousand. They were split, oh, maybe forty percent college prep, sixty percent general. The school's population drew from the minority ethnic groups, the Black community, the Mexican community and they, for the most part, ended up in general classes. There was a whole group of people that I would see especially playing sports. There were a lot of Black kids that I was really good friends with on the playing field but I never saw in class. The same thing was true with the few Mexican friends I had. I didn't see them in any of my classes. For the most part the friends that I did have in my neighborhood that I did see were my Japanese friends, who were also in the college prep system courses.

My new counselor wanted me to apply to schools across the nation. I was reluctant to leave the security of the area. I felt the state universities were well-known schools, respected schools, but they were still close enough and I felt comfortable being in the area. I didn't feel that I wanted to venture halfway across the country, no matter how prestigious the school might be. One of my instructors had gone to Ohio State, so he recommended Ohio State. Purdue, some of the Ivy Leagues, Harvard, were recommended. I pretty much got the gamut of recommendations usually based on my instructors' experience with a particular school. They felt that I would have no problems being accepted. But once I went through everything and began to assess the cost of living and finances entailed with going away to school, this was something that I really hadn't thought of, quite frankly. I hadn't yet grasped the idea that it was going to cost me a certain amount of money to attend one of these schools. That realization soon hit and I knew that my family was in no position to help me financially . I went to the local state college because I happened to get a scholarship there. I didn't apply for any scholarships to any of the schools that I had applied to. I just simply applied for admission to the schools. I had not perceived the financial end of it till I began to talk to the counselor and he said, "Well, this is nice but if you get accepted to the school you realize it's going to cost you X number of dollars per year to go there." At which point I realized that if it cost that much money to go there for me it's an impossibility. For all the planning and everything I went to the state college in my home town. I guess it worked out for the best because I was very happy that I went there. Once I started comparing notes with friends of mine that had gone to the university I found out that in many cases my courses were as rigorous or at times more rigorous than theirs, with the added benefit that I was in a much smaller class whereas they in many cases were in classes of a thousand or so.

In college one of the faculty persons is an advisor. As you came in as a freshman the advising sessions went something like this: I walked in and he said, "You're a chemistry major?" and I said, "Yes." and he said, "O.K." and he gave me a sheet of paper and he said, "On here is a list of courses that you have to complete successfully to get into chemistry. It's outlined on the basis of four years. If you do this within four years you'll get a degree within four years, in five years you'll get a degree in five years. You decide how long it's going to take you, but if you want to be a chemist or get a degree from this school in chemistry that's what you're going to have to do. First semester is mapped out for you, go enroll." That was the advising session--which was O.K. with me. He gave me pretty much an outline of what I wanted to do and I just proceeded about the task of doing it. At that point I had decided that I was definitely going to get out in four years and pursue the two-year master's program and then pursue the Ph.D. program all in that neat little package.

My parents have always been very supportive of whatever I've wanted to do. Once they saw that I indeed was very successful in school, their role was to do anything within their means to make it more possible or easy for me to stay within the academic environment. They didn't feel knowledgeable enough about school and how it worked to really advise me.

When I graduated in 1968 I applied to various grad schools and finally went to one of the state college campuses to pursue their master's degree program. While I was there I got my first formalized exposure to teaching in the form of a teaching assistantship. The teaching assistants literally do participate in the teaching process, are involved in it rather than just taking care of labs. We were given responsibility in terms of presentations for the labs and were responsible to hold regularly scheduled hours where we could act as tutors for anyone that was taking a chemistry course.

The whole scheme of things was sort of upset at this point because I was drafted, and so I ended up with two years in the Army and that sort of upset things. I wasn't the only one that had received induction notices. There were at least four other graduate students . I filed for a deferment of my induction which subsequently was granted. So I finished up the academic year and did not hear from the draft board one way or another until August, just about the time I was thinking , "Maybe they've forgotten about me." In August of 1969 I received a letter. Later that month I was inducted into the Army. Because of my schooling I became singled out by the recruiters as the perfect candidate for the officers' school. But I took my chances on assignments as an enlisted person and ended up being assigned to advanced training as a medic. I went to Texas for their training period and subsequent to that received orders to go over to Vietnam. I spent a little less than a year over there. It was toward the end of 1971-- they were beginning to withdraw troops.

The first two, three months in the army I spent in total active misery because I resented the fact that I was there and I resented pretty much everything about the army--its mentality. I was accustomed to making decisions for myself, carrying out what I considered to be rational decisions. I found out that the army decisions are made by whoever was the rank and it doesn't matter whether they're rational or irrational. If the decision is made you carry it out. After I got over that I decided that the next best thing, given the army, is to be anonymous if possible.

After I came back from the army and actually did start doing some research I suddenly realized that I didn't enjoy the research as much as I enjoyed the interaction with students; and the Ph.D. all of a sudden didn't, in terms of what I began to perceive as my goals, it didn't seem to be as necessary as I had once thought it would be. I found that to do research and to really enjoy it you have to be free of pressures other than the pressure of learning or gaining some knowledge. As I talked with people I found that that wasn't the case, whether you were an academic at a school doing research or you were in industry doing research. In academic settings there was pressure of publishing or obtaining grants, and in industry there was the pressure of producing within a time schedule that was set by management personnel who had no inkling of what was going on in the lab. I didn't want those constraints, those pressures, if I was going to do research. I sort of wanted to do it on its own timeline or the timeline that the system itself set up rather than the academic setting or the corporate system establishment.

I think a lot of the early drive for the Ph.D. was that it seemed to be the pinnacle of academia, regardless of what field you were in. I wanted, if I was going to be in chemistry, I wanted to get as high a degree as possible in chemistry coupled with what I perceived to be an interest in research. As my thoughts changed about research, the Ph.D. became less of a prerequisite. I think that as I matured I was able to get away from thinking that to do anything in chemistry one had to have a Ph.D. degree. I guess a little of the ego slipped away. I could detach myself a little bit about it and say, "Well if I get a Ph.D. in chemistry, in terms of my objectives at this point, it's nothing more than ego satisfaction, because I really don't need that Ph.D. to accomplish what I want to do. I need a master's degree to teach at a community college level--but I certainly don't need a Ph.D."

I could always of course get a secondary teaching credential. I didn't think that I really wanted to do that because at a high school in the sciences you oftentimes don't end up teaching your subject matter the way you would like to but rather compromising that to some extent, and spending the majority of your time perhaps dealing with behavioral problems more than anything else. At the community college I felt that if nothing else I was going to be dealing with people who at least chronologically would be considered adults and people who are no longer being forced literally by state law to be there.

My schedule at the college varies. Before class I review my notes and put together what I feel are the salient points for that particular lecture. I like to have questioning from the students. I normally prefer to lecture, not straight lecture but rather questions and answers. As much as possible after class, depending on whether or not I have a break, I'll usually just come up to my office to do to work. The physical set-up of the school with the study areas in the center and offices around the periphery and the glass doors preclude anyone hiding. Normally what happens is, I'll go to my office and do some work but students will see that I'm in my office and will come in and I will spend usually typically a great portion of the time talking with students, handling questions whether they be in my course or someone else's course. We sort of have a teacher's fair game policy around here. So even if they're not in my class, they'll wander in and ask me a question concerning another one of their chemistry courses. So I spend a great deal of time doing that and I squeeze in basic work that I can in terms of grading and papers and so forth, reporting scores and that sort of task in between students. To keep my sanity I occasionally flee to the cafeteria for a cup of coffee and stay there till a student finds me and we come back to my office. They're pretty persistent once they realize that you're willing to spend time with them. I try to make that a commitment. I tell them as far as I'm concerned when I'm at school my job is to interact with them, to convey any explanations or knowledge that they may want to pursue. They take me at my word. Peppered in between there may be various committee meetings. Lately the meetings have been more frequent than I would like them to be. I have a bad habit of not saying "No," so as a result I end up being on many committees.

Our students, most of them, are engineering students, people who are interested in engineering degrees, taking chemistry to fulfill the engineering degree. Another portion of them are biology majors. Another small fraction are pre-med students. We have only had one chemistry major since I've been here. For whatever reason chemistry majors are few and far between. The bulk of our students will come from blue-collar families. Their parents are employed at the steel mill. There's reasonable representation of minority students in terms of the different ethnic groups. In chemistry or in the sciences we tend to not see many minority students. That's something that I've tried to work with in terms of Mexican students because I'm associated with the club here on campus.

I have served as an advisor. I've finally told them that I thought that one of the other faculty members might want to enjoy that position. I'd served for about three years as their advisor. They have dances, fund-raising events, bake sales and things of that nature. We as faculty will participate in terms of helping with the planning and logistics and helping them understand the mechanisms of the institution and how to get their events planned , so that they know that if they want to put on a dance they've got to plug into the maintenance system, get the event approved by the board, and so forth. We also help with the events themselves. I guess we try to serve as role models and encouragement for Mexican students. We also advise in terms of political issues. We encourage them to become aware of these things and pursue them and not wait until they come to a crisis situation. We'll work in terms of making them aware, making sure they're aware of the various programs that schools offer, be it a scholarship, financial assistance, whatever. Job opportunities. I don't know, I guess maybe it's a big brother, big sister role that we play. It can be very time-consuming and can be a major factor in your life if you allow it to be. I find that what usually happens is that we'll burn out after two or three years of being very, very actively involved with the students. And then take a sort of back seat for a while, still active but not as active. Someone else would then take on that primary role. I'm sort of in that position now.

I don't have as much interaction with other instructors as I would like to. If one could sit down and talk, what's happening in our area, what's happening in their area, curriculum matters, maybe two to three times a week, it would really be great if you could do that. I find that more often than not I'm lucky if I really sit down and have a talk with someone once a week, but the interactions I have are very positive.

When the college was started there was a very conscious effort to hire faculty drawing heavily from ethnic groups and women. We've been involved as a faculty group in trying to provide programs specifically geared towards Mexican students. The Black faculty is also trying to find a curriculum model that they can use to help Black students. They don't perceive us as a threat. There's been enough communication about what we're trying to do and what we hope to do, that we're using our background and our culture as a basis for a model that hopefully can be applied to any group. I think there are tensions in terms of enrollment figures. There are discussions and dialogues about what can we do to bolster or increase enrollments in sciences. The problem is that we aren't getting the Mexicans to enroll in the sciences. We seem to have a hard time getting anyone to enroll in the sciences. We're trying to figure out exactly what it is, why a larger percentage of the students--just the students in general--don't enroll in science courses, or if they do, why they drop. That's been a constant source of discussion.

When I first started teaching and people dropped, I think one of the things that as a new instructor perhaps makes you tend to internalize it more is the fact that they disappear, literally disappear from your class and don't take the time or effort to tell you why they're leaving. During that first year I tended to personalize the students that dropped in terms of well, maybe I'm not really doing as good a job as I think I'm doing. As I got over that first year and began to have more interaction with not just students in my class but students in other courses, and hearing why they had dropped a course because of other circumstances, it turns out that the picture that begins to emerge is that students drop their courses not because of the teaching, in many cases, but because of circumstances outside of the classroom. Their life schedules would change or their work schedules would change. Pressures from the outside kind of bear on them which they didn't visualize when they first started. Other students simply drop because they all of a sudden realize that they've too many courses and they have to make a choice and your course is the one that they've deemed to be expendable. I think after that first year I stopped taking their dropping as a criticism of my course. Now I deal with it in terms of what can I do to help the situation. Some kids are literally forced to drop my course. Can I make some adjustments that would be accommodating enough so that it will fit your needs but not to the point where it compromises the course.

The teaching pace here is very hectic, it's very demanding. I know from talking with other people at other schools that they're sometimes amazed at all the things that I'm expected to do during the course of a day. They're sometimes amazed at the teaching load --it's very high-paced, very frantic . I don't as a rule notice it much, because I do have a keen interest in teaching and that seems to absorb a lot of the wear and tear that I might perhaps accumulate. If people aren't careful they can burn out here very quickly--literally burn out as a teacher. I've come to the realization after six years that the sort of pace that I started with after two years I knew I couldn't sustain. That's why I said that I was trying to withdraw a little bit. I've done that because I feel that there's enough work to do just to be an instructor here, because of the high interaction that is expected of you, in terms of student interaction. If you're also doing the semi-administrative peripheral tasks, that can lead to wearing you out in a big hurry.

When I came here I saw the willingness to try things, the encouragement to try new things, I felt it suited my personality in terms of how I approach a course. That's part of my personality, that I just keep trying to see if I can make parts of what I don't think are working well work better if possible; here I've never felt that that was frowned upon. As a matter of fact it's quite the opposite, it's encouraged.

What teaching has come to mean to me, and the more I feel intent on pursuing it,it provides me with one of those rare opportunities in life to do something that one thoroughly does enjoy and look forward to. The interactions that go on in teaching, the passing on of knowledge, is something that I keenly look forward to, keenly enjoy. I find it very difficult to picture myself at this point in time of my life doing anything else. I have many options, but I don't think that I could do something else and enjoy it as much as what I am currently doing. I still find that I get up without any effort, look forward to coming in and starting another day and picking up where I left off. If it had been a frustrating day the previous day, then I look at those frustrations anew and see how best to handle them.

I think one of the key frustrations that I have is when you have students in your course you know have potential but they don't have the motivation. I see, for whatever reasons, a lack of motivation, a lack of concern or interest in what they're doing. They're completely happy to do as little work as possible--just barely get through. I guess it really bothers me to see people not utilizing their potential. They sometimes will come in and have a discussion in terms of "You know there's a lot of work to your course and I'm not doing very well. I don't think that there ought to be this much work for your course. I think that you oughta ease up on it , too much work involved in it, too many assignments, things to do." I explain to them that they have to realize that the course they're taking, especially if it's a college chemistry course, this is a course that's going to transfer to a four-year institution. It ought to be at that level and my course is no more rigorous than I feel it would be at a four-year school. I think that's my responsibility to you. They don't always agree with that rationale. They feel it's a community college; one ought to perhaps compromise the rigor of your course because it's a community college. So I guess I get frustrated and sometimes offended by that because I'm expected not to have so rigorous a course or not be as demanding. Some students have come in and said, "You know, if I wanted to do this much work, I would have gone to the university" or "I would have gone to some four-year school--I wouldn't have come here." And I say, "Well, I don't know what your conceptions were of what a community college was but it's essentially a college. That's the first two years of your undergraduate work. Academically there should not be any difference. We are expected to be, at least in terms of conceptual and academic rigor, on a par with the university, especially in transfer courses." That sort of frustrates me at times because I guess they expect the compromise. That bothers my inner sense of the way things ought to be, what people ought to expect from a community college. Most other things I can usually just pass off right after they occur. It's not a lasting thing. That one particular thing does, I think, provide a source of frustration.

Usually students will either walk away thinking the course is not worth their time and effort, and will at a later point come back to me and tell me they're not willing to work, and drop. Which I guess is always their option. Other times they're able to see that I am not purposefully trying to work them to death and that if they're successful in my course then they certainly ought to be successful in any other courses at any other place. And I think that for some students it sort of satisfies their initial questions, their initial objections to the work. We normally have one of two outcomes: the student will walk away pretty much satisfied that he's not being overly worked; or he'll walk away with the idea that, well, if this is the work that I have to do to take a chemistry course, then I guess I'm not going to take any chemistry courses here or any other place. They'll come back and tell me they're not going to take "your course". "I thought I wanted to go into the field but if I have to go through these courses to get to it, it's not worth my time and effort at this point in my life. I'm going to try something else."

I try to talk with the student and have them realize that the decision ought not to be made as a result of some frustration. I try to point out to them that you might have to suffer through my course, if that's the way they want to look at it, but the pay-off is that you'll be able to go out into a field that you're interested in, you enjoy working in, hopefully, and that you're going to be doing that for thirty to thirty-five years. I try to get them to look at things in bigger scope --there's a lot of work right now for them. I don't get involved in it personally one way or another because I feel that that's their decision to make. All I can do is try to point out different factors.

I think with a more advanced student one might begin to, perhaps, build up some sort of collegial relationship. I had a student ...things seemed like they were going really well. She and her husband were thinking of switching jobs. She was feeling very good. She got through part of the second semester and things in her life just kind of fell apart. She and her husband separated. She ended up not being able to complete that last semester. It bothered me because here was a student who had the interest and circumstances were just going to prevent her from completing this course, letting her move on in her life. I tried very hard to do whatever was at my disposal so that she could complete the course. It finally reached a point where no matter how much time I was going to devote to her, she wasn't going to catch up. That affected me in a personal way. When a student makes some progress you tend to personalize their triumphs and defeats. As I said, I try. I still have energy and the understanding of my wife so that I can devote extra time to students if the need arises.

I do make every effort to be accommodating as long as it doesn't involve compromising the course. Usually the rule of thumb that I use is that I don't do anything for any one student that I wouldn't be perfectly willing to do for the whole class, and I use that as my guideline. As I talk with students the picture I get of high school education is one in which they never had been asked to really extend themselves. They're not used to being challenged and asked to do things. They're used to sliding by, with a minimum of work and still being granted a grade. They feel that if they show up to class every day that that guarantees them, if nothing else, a C. If they turn in a home work assignment too that should be a B. If they do anywhere close to respectably on any one exam, that's an A. And they're very surprised when I tell them that's not the way it works, not the way it ought to work. I say, if you get an A in my course I feel the responsibility that if you go to another school someone can talk to you and get the impression that yes, indeed, you are an A student; you do have good enough mastery of the subject matter that they're not surprised when you tell them you got an A in my course. If you go to someplace else and someone talks to you and they begin to wonder if you ever had a chemistry course, and then you tell them you got an A in my course, I don't think I could tolerate that. Because that tells me I'm not giving you enough chemistry in the course. I'm giving you something else under the guise of chemistry. That's a disservice to you. I guess it's a disservice to people who are going to be involved with you in another institution where you transfer.

You get people that are high school graduates that you just simply have to tell them, you know, your problem isn't that you can't understand chemistry; your problem is that you can't do math, your problem is that you can't read. For all I know you're potentially the next great chemist, but your problems are not an inability to understand chemistry. Your problems are much more basic than that. Your problem is that you just cannot read. If you can't read a chemistry text, you're not going to learn the subject matter. I tell them because I don't want them to feel that it's chemistry per se that is their problem. I would like them to be aware of the fact that they have a much more fundamental problem that's going to affect every class they take, not just chemistry. The lack of success in school isn't tied to any particular subject matter but rather their inability to do one of the very basic tasks in education and that's reading, comprehending what one reads.

The fact that we're in the sciences-- the area itself does a lot of self-screening. People are very reluctant, if they feel shaky at all, to enroll in a science course. I don't see as high a percentage or as many students that can't read or do math as, say, as someone in the liberal arts area. You know, when I talk to other instructors, they say gee, you can't believe it, I've got half my class sitting there and they just literally cannot read.

As I said, I think for me school has always been a setting where I have enjoyed success. I have derived a great deal of pleasure from just being involved in the process. I guess I just see this as an extension of that history. I can observe students going through that process . I think when I, about the second year of college, became very interested in how people internalize knowledge--how do you finally come to the point where it stops being something that's just written or something that's just verbalized but something that's literally a part of you, that you can then use to branch off and build on. That process became very interesting to me. It gives me satisfaction and enjoyment, seeing students reach that point. I think it's just some very basic emotion within me that is fulfilled by seeing that process, be it in myself or someone else, that one moment that comes to you when you find that you do gain insight. I look at students as I'm explaining things to them. I think that the payoff for me is I keep working at it and I devote as much time to it because I think that one instant of time when you can see their expression change and their eyes change from bewildered look to a very sort of enlivened look and all of a sudden they look at you and that's so easy! Why didn't I understand that before? Why did it take me so long? That one moment in time that I now share with students is immensely satisfying to me and keeps me coming back.

It was in my second year, when I took organic chemistry, the professor I had presented the material from a standpoint which looked at reactions not as something remembered by rote but reactions as a consequence of some very basic principles. That was the first time someone had pointed that out to me, that there are a lot of things that you can learn but there are some very basic things that can become very powerful tools. You don't have to know a lot of things; but if you know these few basic facts and you know them very well, they're a part of you. Then you're going to surprise yourself and other people .

I never really consciously thought about how much money am I going to make in chemistry. I think for me it was sufficient to know that as a chemist I could make a living, by most standards probably an adequate living, more than adequate, by my family's standards. I think the closer I came to have to make a decision about are you going to stick with chemistry, and what are you going to do in chemistry, what tasks are you ultimately going to perform and receive payment to sustain you, what area are you going to choose, what are you going to do--I think the closer I got to that and thought about it, and examined the options that I felt I had, teaching seemed to be ideal in the sense that I could basically enjoy doing what I wanted to do. I guess the monetary part of it hasn't really been a primary concern for me and sometimes I know I could have perhaps done better in industry monetarily, but that's never bothered me. I think it's all the other things associated with what I'm doing, and what they provide for me in terms of the emotional contentment which more than offsets any monetary considerations. My basic concern now is that the compensation for doing this is adequate to meet my family's needs. I think that what would probably force me out, if anything would force me out, would be the fact that this job could just not provide for my family. I think I continue to grow in the field, continue to grow in perception and insights.

Profile

JAMES MOWRY

(James Mowry, in his late thirties, teaches chemistry at a rural New York community college. He was interviewed twice in his office and once at his home in the winter of 1982.)

I was born in 1942. My father was a farmer, sold lime and fertilizer and seed. He had bought an old farm that was run down--everybody said he was crazy. From the time that I can remember I had to work. I can remember having a little wagon and pulling it full of wood, and things like feeding cows or sweeping floors in barns. They were just chores that had to get done.

In our family we had several tragedies. My parents lost a brother and they lost a little girl prematurely. A brother of mine was born and he was just a few days old. He couldn't keep the food down. I never really knew him. My parents raised a girl who was a niece of my parents. Then they took in a boy that no one else could handle and he was treated like one of the family. Then I also had a retarded brother, four years older than I am. I would describe my mother as an extremely patient person, an extremely loving person, very quiet, and she could outwork ninety percent of the men. My dad is a very hard worker even to this day. He doesn't collect social security and he's seventy-two years old.

The farm started out as a very poor farm and we turned it into a topnotch farm. By the time I had finished high school we had eighty-four head of dairy cattle on one hundred acres, and except for hay we were self-sufficient. From the time I was about fourteen years old through senior year in high school I did most of the milking, most of the chores, and my mother would pitch in and do what she could. My retarded brother would do some things, like sweep the floors. There were a lot of things that I learned from that whole thing. About a year after he was born he wasn't doing any walking, he wasn't moving around, so my parents said there's something wrong with this child. They took him to the doctors. After several months they said he was retarded, and they said also that he'd never walk or he'd never talk. They heard about this guy who was a remarkable doctor. He put casts on his legs and by six months later they had him walking. If you saw him today, he could run as fast as we can. Everybody said, "Put him away, put him away. You know you've got other children to worry about, put him away." My parents couldn't take that. They kept him all their lives, until recently .

I can remember some things happening in my life which were spin-offs from that experience. When I was about eighteen years old some girls I think were a little reluctant to date me, because they were afraid. Nothing ever really said, but I felt it. Others were very sympathetic, who would talk about it, and I was willing to talk because it was life, it was not something that we should hide. We had chores to do every day. He would sweep up the floor, the barn, if I were cleaning out a box stall. He could go up and throw down bales of hay. He could save you a lot of steps. He'd feed calves and he'd get down on his knees in the manure and hug the calf. I remember him as loving to swing on a swing, loving attention. We had a guy one time who came for fertilizer and saw him and said, "I can't buy fertilizer from you." I said, "Why?" And he looked and said, "That guy over there, he's an idiot." And I got angry. I said, "You're the only God damn idiot I've ever seen." I just let it hang out. I said, "As far as I'm concerned, you're good riddance." I told my dad about it and he said, "The guy's slow paying, we don't care anyhow, let him go somewhere else." He was hurt at first. My mother used to can a lot of jelly and she'd have things like grape jelly, elderberry jelly. They're all about the same color, kind of purplish or blueish. One day a doctor told her what his IQ was, and she said, "I don't believe that." And he says, "Why?" "Because my other son who's four years old can't pick out the difference between those jellies and he can." I was the four-year-old dummy who couldn't do it. I would play baseball with him, pitch to him and he would hit the ball. We used to play catch together. Some of the things that have happened have contributed to my attitude about systems and about people.

I was a good student in high school, top of the class. Going to school was pretty much a loner. I wanted to play basketball my senior year because I was a pretty good basketball player. Somebody had to milk those cows. My senior year those cows got milked so quickly you wouldn't believe it. My father said, "All right, if you're going to play basketball you've still got to milk those cows, night and morning." It was a small high school, thirty-five in the graduating class. I said that I wanted to play basketball and the agreement with the teachers and the principal was that if I got below a B average or if my grades started falling off I would have to quit.

That I would go to college there was never any doubt. My mother graduated from high school. My dad, being a farmer and being a very hard worker and very successful at what he did, always said, "You get your education--someday it will pay off." Every kid that ever graduated from that little high school was successful. I don't think you'll find a single one on unemployment because most of them, if they're out of a job, they'll go and find something else. I think that's the advantage of a farm community.

I was strong in math and physics and chemistry and I found out in high school that's what I liked. My dad always said, "You've got to find out what you like--I can't tell you what to do." He always wanted me to come back to the farm. I'd never had a chemistry course in high school until my senior year. I found out I was good at it--it just came naturally. But when I got down to the state college I found out that I did not have quite the math background that some of the other people had, coming from the bigger high schools. They were getting into calculus in high school. I had to work harder. I was somewhat of an overachiever in high school. I had terrible study habits. I had to work harder at some of the engineering subjects. When I got in the engineering program, I really had to work at it. I had an eye problem, depth perception, that I never knew about till my junior year in college, and that's when I transferred to the state university. Evidently that depth perception wasn't there and yet I played basketball, so figure that out. The second year I fell off the barn roof and I couldn't play any longer. That was it. That took care of any thoughts of basketball. We were on the roof, painting the aluminum. Two of us on a ladder and I only have another three or four hours of work. Sure enough, that afternoon I came off that barn roof--never had a chance. It just shot out just like a rocket and I was in the air before I knew what happened. I broke a bone in my foot and I hurt my back. Was in the hospital for ten days. Two weeks later I was out again working with the casts all over me.

I'd come to the point that I really liked chemistry better than I did engineering courses. I just switched to chemistry so I ended up as a chemistry major. I frankly had finished all the chemistry courses they offered by my junior year so I said I'm going to transfer. I just felt that it was time to move on somewhere else. I was transferred as a senior in 1963 and I enjoyed the state university a great deal. I went out with my future wife there and that was probably one reason. It was a little scary at first because it was big. I was in a fraternity and involved in all kinds of activities, May Day parades and everything else. I sang in a fraternity choir. We had some shows on the road. That was a good experience. I remember my high school music teacher saying "I didn't know that you could sing."

I forgot to mention that the church did play a major role in my life--it always has. It was a small Presbyterian church. Often on Sunday morning when I was growing up it was a difficult time to go because you still had to do the chores before you went. And if something broke we had to fix it before we could go to church. We had a mower that was a pull-type mower for horses, and one day that mower broke when I was about fourteen, fifteen, I don't know how old I was. My dad was mowing and he said, "Can you?" We bought a little welder when I was probably ten, eleven years old and I started playing with it, and I'd weld something, and I'd hit it with a sledge hammer and break and weld it again. One day I had to weld the mowing machine out there. It broke in the frame. He says, "Do you think you can fix it?" I said, "Yeah, I can fix it." I was welding it in place and I started hitting it with a sledge hammer and he came and he saw me hitting the heck out of it and he said, "What are you doing that for?" And I said, "Well, if it's going to break I want it to break here, not in the fields." The weld didn't look that great but I'll guarantee you when he sold the farm we sold that mower and it had never broken.

After the university I worked in industry for a year. I was still in chemistry. I wasn't sure if I was going back to the farm . My wife had one more year to go in school so I worked that year for a chemical company in Ohio while my wife was finishing up. We lived in a trailer. She was studying foreign languages. She finished and then I decided to apply to grad school.

My work in industry at the labs--the guy over me had his Ph.D. in chemistry, everybody over me had their Ph.D. in chemistry. I had a bachelor's and after a few months I had pretty much proven myself. I had gotten two promotions. I found very quickly , hey, I'm doing the work, doing the writing and this guy is taking the credit. I said, "If he can do it, I can do it. If that guy can get a doctorate, I can get a doctorate." With thoughts of going to industry. No thoughts of ever going to teaching. As far as I was concerned, high school kids were basically wasting my time. And college kids weren't that much different. So that was the furthest from my mind. I never could have imagined myself being a teacher, a professor. I actually applied for a master's program. I was not aware of the fact that you can get your doctorate without getting your master's. And after I got up there my advisor said to me, "Why don't you apply for the doctoral program instead of just for the master's?" I found that working with my hands in the lab, I was just naturally gifted. It's a feeling, and I'm not sure I can explain it, it's just a feeling that you have that it'll work. So in the lab preparation I was probably stronger than most of the grad students. That's when I learned how to study--through the first year of graduate school.

My second year in graduate school my advisor was teaching a course, "Chemistry for Engineers and Science Majors." He went on a conference to Czechoslovakia and he asked me if I'd take over his lab. At this point I was doing course work and doing some research. I didn't want to be there for ten years getting my doctorate. If I was going to be there for ten years I'd be back milking cows and if I was going to be there for six years I'd go back and milk cows. I was there to get my doctorate and get out. I was not going to play around with it . I had all intentions of going to industry so he asked me to cover his section in his lab. I said, "I don't know if I can." He says, "Well, try it and see how you like it." The first day in class I shook like a leaf, and I found out during the first two weeks I kind of liked it.

My father kept the farm till I finished my doctorate and took my present job. He made this remark several times: "Well, when you get done with all that education, all that training, you'll be back." He kept it, I think, in hopes that I would be back. Finally he said, "I've got to sell this farm. I can't handle it anymore. I want an answer yes or no, are you coming back?" And I said, "No," and he said, "Okay." I had to give it some thought but I knew that I could not get up and down with those cows anymore. After falling off the barn roof I didn't have the strength in my wrists that I had before. Frankly I loved it. I loved the dairying, I loved the farm work, but what got me was the lime and fertilizer business. It was nothing for a semi to pull in at midnight and be unloaded with twenty tons of fertilizer and that drove me right up a tree. I may have still gone back, even though I had a doctorate, but the thing that did me in was a fluke accident. We had a twelve-year-old cow and her name was Sarah. It was a registered Holstein. This twelve-year-old cow I had raised as a calf. I knew her like the back of my hand. I had not been around her for almost a year. She kicked me in the chest and knocked me over, twisted ligaments in my right knee. That one little accident did me in because I could no longer get up and down consistently. I realized then that it was over. There was no way that I could ever go back to farming unless it was as a gentleman farmer. Frankly, I still have it in my heart.

There was a student at the university who grew up in this community and he said , "Hey, you know there's a new community college opening up in our area. You should look into it. They want somebody who can teach physics, math, and chemistry." Because of my initial engineering background I had that in my background. And so I came down and interviewed. I laid down a course outline and what I wanted, what instrumentation I wanted, for the lab. The dean said, "Do you need all that equipment?" And I said, "Yes, the equipment is hands-on equipment, not expensive theoretical equipment. It is equipment every student could use. You could take students and train them either for jobs immediately or for transfer." The dean interviewed me and he called me back and made me an offer within a week. There were a couple of reasons why I finally took this position. One was the fact that my wife and I had decided that I was going to teach for five or six years and I could always move on. We did not have any intentions of staying. Second reason: we spent our honeymoon in this area and we loved it.

I do a number of things here; sometimes I wonder which hat I wear. I developed a series of courses not only for chemistry which was my field, but outside my field. One of the exciting things about this institution is that you can develop programs, course content, that other people don't have the time to think about. Another factor: when I finished graduate school I said I don't want to get into "publish or perish." I loved research. I love doing the lab work, it just comes naturally, but I didn't want to get into the publish-or-perish rat race, articles in certain journals. I didn't want that, that wasn't my forte. Research was, but the publishing wasn't. Well, the following February I took my orals for the doctorate and I received my official Ph.D. the following May. I always had the feeling that in universities to get anywhere you had to publish a great deal. The problem that I saw was I was more into teaching. I enjoyed the teaching but I did not enjoy sitting down and writing and publishing. I did not enjoy that at all. What's ironical about it is how many articles I've published . I'm still writing. Somewhere around twenty-five publications. Some of them are in education. What I've done is to take the system, the profs that I've had, and I've tried to pull out the best, the little tidbits each one has produced, and tried to package each one of them into something that works. I'm talking here about a procedure of learning.

I have felt for a long time science people have been just so traditional in their approaches and they've limited the learning by that. For example one of the things we do, we have an auction in organic chemistry. You set up a problem. One of the problems is you have a site where they store radioactive waste. We state the problem and then what we do is basically set up our class, and they study the situation, and they have to come up with a method of solving the problem, getting rid of the waste. They have to use all their math, all their chemistry, all their physics. They bid on these problems during an auction. If I hadn't seen the solutions myself I never would have believed that sophomore students could come up with solutions. I have a philosophy that you have to learn how to think and I'll use this material to teach you how to think.

Basically I lecture a lot but at the same time there's some exchange. It depends on the course. That doesn't mean that you can't have a lot of interchange and interplay. I also question. When a student thinks he has the right answer, I question him and make him prove it. I try to bring in some things with humor into the classroom. I tend towards the lecture, board work, but I guess I'm relaxed and not so formal that a student doesn't feel free to ask questions. I try to get as much energy into it as possible. You have to cover the material . I have what I call a crash review session before the exam for one hour. I think the students, if they described me, would say that I take my coat off, and I go crazy, and try to make the students believe that they can learn it, and learn it easily. That's really my goal.

A lot of people have said that the community college student tends to be a weaker student than in a four-year school. I've been here twelve years and I've talked to science majors up at the university in chemistry and I honestly cannot say that. Now I will admit that there have been some students that have come in and I've had to be a little more patient and spend more time with them and provide help sessions--but I can say that I've had some students who are as good as any students I've seen anywhere.

Some of the students were better than I was at that age. So I cannot say that the students are any better or any worse. Of course you have to remember that I'm in chemistry and physics and I don't think that most people take chemistry and physics unless they're really interested in it. Most of my people transfer, probably ninety percent. A lot of them are in engineering, a lot of them are in forestry. Once in a while we'll get a humanities or science major, but not very often.

I think there's a difference in some of the community college students. Some lack confidence, some come from very, very, poor backgrounds. Let's put it this way, these kids would never have gone to college otherwise, that's the bottom line. Another thing, this institution got into the education business late. We hired a lot of new Ph.D.'s and master's people. If you look through our library--we don't have a lot of the old books. We have the new books, all within the last ten, twelve, fifteen years. I don't believe that we really represent the traditional community college atmosphere, basically training for jobs and not going on to a four-year degree. It wasn't until two years ago that the number started lowering because we implemented some programs, like business and nursing, that were more technically orientated. We were basically a transfer institution.

We get some students because they really can't afford to go anywhere else. We get a number of students who are unsure of themselves. They really should be in a topnotch program, a topnotch university. I'm talking about the top one percent. It's amazing how many of those students we do get. We offer a full scholarship to all students who graduate in the top ten percent of their class. So we have one group of students who are very poorly prepared. We have another group who are the top of the class. We have those who drive in with a Cadillac and we have those who drive in with their 1952 Chevy's. Our average age at this college right now is twenty-seven years old. We have students coming in here taking calculus, engineering, physics, chemistry , English, that will stand up in any university. We have a number of students who really could go to any number of schools. We have two students this year who are going to MIT next year.

One particular student I can say we are pretty proud of. First time I met her was through a local minister whose wife taught here on campus. The high school teachers were trying to get this student to go on to college. She was a strong student in math, she was a strong student in science, she was just generally a strong student in anything. She could major in psychology or English or anything. When I walked in the house --it was on a back street--they had a kerosene stove in the living room and dogs and chickens and cats in the house. The father did not work. He had a back problem. The mother worked at a local industry at a minimum wage. They had a whole houseful of kids. This girl was a very bright girl but her self image was horrible. To get her father to agree to allow her to come to college was a major traumatic experience.

I talked to the parents and to the daughter. I just said, "We are interested in your daughter, we'd like to see her go to school. She could go to college and she could still stay at home." I tried to ease their fears of her going away, their fears of, you know, where are we going to get the money, and tried to just convince them it was the right thing for her to do. The first question I remember him asking was, "What is she going to learn?" I said, "Well, if she's good in science and good in math, there are lots of jobs out there. I'm sure she'll go a long way." This girl was kind of a chunky girl. She'd walk around with her head down. Her father did let her come to college. He said he would let her try it. She's now an executive in an industry. She's got her bachelor's, master's, and she's , as the boss describes her, his right-hand man. Before her father died I saw him on the street one day, and he was so proud of her.

Each individual is different. There are some that you don't dare make any harsh statements to because they'll fall apart quick. There are others you really have to rough up a little bit. One particular student, the only word I could use is lazy, he had all kinds of ability. He started giving me all these stories about he wasn't going to do this. I said, "If you're in my curriculum you're going to do it and I'm not going to pass you till you do." He refused to turn in his labs. He says that'll only drop it down to a B or a C. I said, "Not in my case, you flunk." He said, "But you can't do that." "The hell I can't, watch me." And I said, "You can challenge it to the pope, it won't make any differene to me. You can go to the president of the college, it won't make any difference. You have tomorrow night to get those labs in and get your project done and if you don't have it done, it's an F." He had them on my doorstep by five-thirty that night and he said, "You realize what you did to me--I had to miss a day's work." That guy is now a very good lawyer. He's also a kid who wanted to quit school. I got wind of it after he left here and I went to pay him a visit. He said, "I was thinking about dropping out. I thought I'd maybe go live in the woods somewhere." I said, "You're wasting your life. You've got all the talent in the world and you're just screwing around and copping out." Those are the words I used. I just walked out and slammed the door. The following semester he re-registered and two years ago he finished. Sometimes you have to get a little mean. I think sometimes you have to lay it on the line. I find it very true of students. You get into more of a personal relationship with them. You get to know them. I would say that I treat my students a little bit like the research advisors treat their graduate students but I do it on the freshman, sophomore level, especially at the sophomore level.

I refuse to teach during the summer because I need that time. I also do quite a bit of consulting. Different projects:

waste water, water treatment industry, municipal sewers. Right now I'm working on a project on combustion of organic chemicals, a very positive thing for this country. I've got a national award and a state award, excellence in teaching, and chemical manufacturers' association award. The manufacturers' award was from professionals in the field of chemistry, which is kind of ironic when you think about it; this is the last place you'd think of about getting an award like that.

If you can have five excellent teachers side by side the one to be promoted first is the one that is really the more professional in terms of professional organizations, publications, organizations in the community, contributions to the campus. I've been active. If I'm going to a meeting I'm going to present a paper in many cases. And that's the difference. I'm a division chairman. All the sciences and engineering and forestry and nursing are included. An awful lot of responsibility. Right now it's burdensome but there are times when it's light.

There's a statement in this community: if you're here seven years you'll never get out. And I'm starting to believe it. The place grows on you. There can be pressure, lots of pressure at this institution; the pressure is only if you accept it, if you want to get involved in it. I moved up rather quickly because of my salary that I negotiated in the beginning. I am not the highest paid. I guess you might say I'm a big fish in a little pond. I have tried to maintain my own professional stature by being professional and being completely aboveboard and honest and I've tried to maintain my professional stature in the community outside . I've made a conscientious effort not to hurt people. I try to remain flexible in any tough situations and that's even in the community. We've become a viable part of the community. We really play a role in the community.

We have a big supply of organic chemical waste that we're trying to get rid of. This is something that impacts the whole country,not just this area. Much of my consulting work goes far beyond this institution, far beyond the community. We fought off a particular power plant. I was the guy in the trenches digging out the scientific material, digging out the data and I tried to present as honest a picture as I could.

When I first started here I was a little reluctant to teach at a two-year college. There was an attitude about two-year colleges that exists across the country in many of the four-year schools. I could have just as easily taught in a four-year college but I like the small community. I've thought about what would I have done at a four-year institution. I would probably have done the same thing.

I think my work means something different today than it did five years ago. I think I have reached what I consider my most effective performance stage. I'm not absolutely convinced that I teach with as much heart as I did. Part of that is because I'm somewhat strapped with administrative work and also because my interests have changed to some degree. Consulting helps my performance in the classroom. I sometimes question my attitude towards students. I used to be very patient with them. I don't have as much time for them now as I did before. Maybe I expect more. I think I'm maybe a little tougher than what I was. I don't spend as much time explaining materials as I used to. Teaching allows me to do what I really want to do. That is, develop new programs plus learning new things plus increasing my consulting proficiency. If I got out of teaching I would miss it, I know I would miss it. I sometimes wonder about going into industry where there's so much more money. The temptation is there. Or going into consulting full-time. I've had to turn away consulting jobs. At one time I thought maybe I might like administration but I'm not convinced that I would totally enjoy administration.

One advantage I have at this community college is that I can implement programs. I can get changes. I think quality of education means a great deal to me. I am willing to dig a little more even in my own courses here. I feel the students should be exposed to more quality material and I frankly believe in a quality product, that's the bottom line. For example, if a particular student has a choice of a series of courses—say the student has to choose a social science elective for their transfer institution— I believe the student should choose the one that will meet his future needs the most. If a student is going to a certain university and they strongly feel that they want the student to have, as a social science elective, Introduction to Sociology, or Economics, that's the one that they should choose. They should not be locked out of a particular course because of maintaining load at a certain level. Each instructor has to have so many students, let's say, fifteen students to run a class. Let's say there's only ten students in that class, that class may get cancelled. I don't agree with the philosophy that you should cancel the class with ten students. Those ten students are just as important as one with one hundred in it. The student may be locked out because of budget. I put the student demand over budget.

Consulting is a real challenge. In my case it's mostly applications of chemistry and physics and everything that I've ever learned applied to a variety of systems. I've been called in some situations like a resort where they'll have a large flow of sewerage or waste water into a septic system. It clogs up for a reason, because the chemistry of the septic system has changed. So we have to come up with a different method to unclog it and a different method to prevent clogging. That kind of project . Some of them are engineering projects.

Ever since about 1970 to 1971 I started to become active in things like the environmental commission. I've taught a lot of the credit-free courses and the evening courses. Through that process people start bringing in samples and asking questions. You build a reputation just by people asking you questions and then you make suggestions. It's hard to say how many hours of work I actually put in. Probably ten hours a week. I'm putting more and more of my energy into that [the consulting work]. I don't know what the results will be in the long run or what the future will be in that area. I know it's going to be a hot area. There are some possibilities down the line that could boggle the mind in terms of job potential. But I'm not counting on those. I'm just sitting back and waiting and doing my job now.

My feeling is that because of all this work that I don't have time to be in my office to spend with the students. Before I would go to class, come back to my office, spend my time, play basketball with the students, a whole bunch of things. I would be around the school and the students could catch me anywhere. Now they have a tough time finding me. It's almost like they have to stand in line. I'm much harder to catch these days. I come in the house and I have phone messages. I don't have time to spend, to stand around and chat. Before I would chat and talk. I used to know a lot about every student. I'd find out about them and about their family and a lot of students used to come to me to confide in me whereas I don't have time for that anymore. In terms of students, personal relationships, I was probably more valuable to them then. In terms of the institution I don't think there's any doubt that I'm more valuable now, from the standpoint that I bring more recognition to the institution. Somebody said, "Why aren't you at a four-year school?" They asked me that once. "Because I enjoy it here and I can have more impact here." You have to create your own opportunity. You can pretty much do what you want in our particular situation and I think I've done that. A lot of those things have come about by accident, I think, or I just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

A lot of things that I do are not intrinsic to my job at the community college. The college could survive without it. I think it helps the students in the sense of realizing that there are ways to solve problems and I think it helps my attitude in my teaching, so it does impact students. But in terms of recruiting students I'm not sure how much it really impacts. It takes a lot away from your own personal life, it interrupts your life a great deal, the phone calls that I get. I've gotten them from students, I've gotten them from everybody. I think my advisor felt I should have probably taken the four-year position. He said something about that, but you've got to remember it was 1969. I think community colleges are much more respected today than they were in 1969. I get the sense that community college people are different people from what they were. I took the community college position for a specific reason and that was that I could be my own boss and be independent. I think most of the people who are teaching here are pretty darn independent. They like to set their own schedule and many of them don't like change whereas I don't mind change at all. When I was at the university and I taught the laboratory section, I found that the students that I got there were not that much different than what I've got now. But remember I'm talking about students in chemistry, I'm not talking about students in other areas. I think the key is the field.

Profile

EUGENE BOWEN

(Eugene Bowen, in his early forties, teaches mathematics at a Massachusetts suburban community college. We interviewed him in his office during the spring of 1980.)

Both my parents were teachers. My mother was an elementary school teacher, and my dad was a high school teacher. I was the only child in the family, so I would often be at school with my parents after school before we all drove home together. Both my parents really liked teaching. They weren't paid a huge amount back then, but they really did like it. I just developed a natural interest then.

When I was in high school I had some terrible math teachers. I was always good at math. I started developing a resolution that I would really like to teach math because I know that I could do better. I was doing pretty well in most of my high school subjects so it was hard for me to decide which subject I really belonged in . My math teachers, at least the good ones, were always encouraging me to pursue math.

Mom and Dad were about thirty-eight or forty when they had me. They weren't the kind of parents that would come out on the beach and play ball, but they were the kind of parents that would sit down and talk a lot. We would sit and talk at breakfast, listen to the news, read the paper, and discuss current events. We would go to church together and talk about what the sermon meant. Every summer we went to Nova Scotia for two to four weeks and lived on my uncle's very primitive farm. It had no running water, no lights. He had the old kerosene lamps, the old wood stove, the old traditional five-hundred-foot walk to the outhouse. I saw the quality of life there: be careful with what you have and just be happy with yourself. I saw that in my uncle, I saw that in the farming community up there.

My Dad had been very athletic in high school and college and I was just terrible in sports. There was a world of sports that I really couldn't enter. But I discovered by looking at the people on the tennis team that you just had to work at certain things. So I tried out for the tennis team and got all this coaching and lessons and managed to make it onto the tennis team. The whole world of the high school environment had thousands of activities. I remember telling my parents, "I will really be glad to get to college where life is simpler." They said, "We will write that down and remind you of that when you get to college." Finally I graduated from high school. I was the second in my class.

My mother came from rural Canada. If you wanted to raise yourself in social stature and you didn't want to be a secretary or a typist, the socially acceptable way to rise up that most people chose was either to be a teacher or to be a nurse. She went to what was then a normal school for two years after finishing high school. She started teaching in Canada and then decided that the United States looked more exciting . Mom continued to teach for several years till she had me and then she dropped out of teaching for a while, and missed it. When I was in fourth grade she went back to a full-time teaching job and continued to teach until she was retirement age. So hers was kind of a purposeful choice for teaching. My dad was totally different. He taught high school for twenty-seven years. He just kind of fell into it. He had always thought he would do something different. In fact, he never finished his college degree. He got two and a half years and that was enough to start teaching in those days. He was good in sports so he started teaching the high school athletic teams and he was very gifted in working with his hands and made a good shop teacher.

In high school I developed a way of dividing people into two maybe three groups: the kind who were good in academics, were serious students, I felt a natural affinity for. Lots of things to talk about, organizations that I was in, the choral group, the concert band, the student council, the math team. We respected each other, but toward the majority of the students in the school I felt a distance. I couldn't understand why they were going out drinking and carousing. I couldn't understand why they were so thrilled with sports. They couldn't understand why I was always a goody-goody. I didn't want to do the things they wanted to do. Someone invited me to one of their swinging parties. I just kind of stood there in a state of shock. The girl that threw the party was extremely rich. She had her own private telephone and anything she wanted. She was angry with her parents all the time , was frustrated and couldn't communicate with adults, and I just couldn't understand that world. I couldn't understand the extravagance. My folks were very frugal. My parents were very close. They grew up giving me sort of a misconception that adults never fight or argue and never have a disagreement and I carried that misconception for quite a few years.

When I got to college, I again found that math seemed to be one of my stronger areas. There were some students that were having a lot of trouble, and I ended up tutoring them and I enjoyed that. Then I did some student teaching in my senior year of college and I was excited about that. My parents were very influential at that point. They had seen many struggling high school teachers try to raise a family and go on for their master's degree. So they said, "Why don't you go on and get your master's degree?" So I went to Harvard and got my degree.

My college was a Christian college. Several people from my church had gone there. It was a very good choice for me. I got away from home. I didn't realize how deep I was tied into home. I had never dated. There was a whole class of kids I had never learned to be friends with, and at a fairly small Christian college it was easy to make friends with everyone, even the jocks and the kids that cared about nothing but academics. I enjoyed college quite a bit. I was interested in everything. I wanted English, literature, and liberal arts. I wanted a lot. I just didn't want math. I had played clarinet in high school. My roommate was in the concert band in college and he said, "Wouldn't you like to join the concert band ?" It was a very friendly and enjoyable group and I stayed with the concert band all four years in college. It was not only the excitement of playing; also every year the band goes on tour during spring vacation. We went to California, we went to the Northwest, we went to the South, parts of the country that I had never seen. I caught flak from the math professors. One teacher said, "If you are a serious mathematician you should not let anything come between you and math."

I did feel the excitement of the idea of a Christian liberal arts college where people came with that kind of commonality, of that same kind of commitment but a freedom to study things from a variety of perspectives. When I was at college they really encouraged you to find some place in the secular world where most of the people think that what you think is a bunch of hooey. The place that I picked was skid row in Chicago. Took a bus every Sunday morning. There was a lot of times you would sit down and talk to a guy and he would look at you and say, "Kid, you had breakfast this morning? I am starved and what are you going to do about it?" A lot of people really asked questions and asked how they could find God. I remember talking to one guy. He asked all these questions and I read him some passages from the Bible and shared my experience. He said he had been on skid row for twelve to fourteen years. The next week I got off the bus and coming down the street was this guy and instead of him in the derelict clothes , he was in a suit. He was shaved and neat. He came and he said, "You know Gene, God is really real. My life is so changed, you wouldn't believe it." So I was beginning to put my faith on the line with anybody that I came in contact with.

I decided to go to Harvard primarily because I wanted to go to a good school and combine teaching and math and at that time Harvard had a very powerful Master of Arts in Teaching program. One of the guys that I got to be really good friends with at Harvard misread the final exam schedule. I went to the math exam and he wasn't there. So right after the exam was over I went over to his room and I said "Gee Sam, are you sick?" He said, "No." I said, "You didn't come to the exam this morning." Well, we went to see the professor and the professor exploded. "You misread the exam schedule. You can't do that." He said, "Harvard does not allow make up exams." I said, "Well, ah, the exam is still there. He hasn't done anything. Can't he just sit down and take it?" "No, that is not allowed." Then he said, "Well, this is an emergency. You should go see the Dean of Students right away." And the final resolution was, "This is tough luck. You misread the exam schedule, so you will get an F for the course." And my friend wasn't even there, his mind was somewhere else. I said, "Why are you so upset?" He said, "My parents can't accept this." He had a mental breakdown. I didn't realize how a family would put on that pressure . In my system if you failed or something there was always a way out. For this poor fellow, the way he built it up in his mind, there was no way out.

We had smart kids at college who had 800 in their college boards. At Harvard I sat next to one kid who walked in and plopped down in the chair and no notebook, no pencil, no notes of any kind. He sat there , a sophomore, taking my graduate course. The professor went over a half-hour lecture that had most of us in the class saying, "What is he talking about?" After thirty minutes this fellow said, "Professor, I perceive in the third axiom that you have derived an alternate approach." The guy was for real. He thought as rapidly as the professor over a field that he had never had before. I had never worked with students like that before. I had never been in a class where somebody was so far above me. Here were people that ate, slept, lived and breathed learning and studies. They were way, way up there and did in fifteen minutes what took me two hours.

Then I went into the Army for two years. I had gone through ROTC. The Vietnam War was taking everybody's attention back then, so you knew that you were going to be in the service one way or another. I figured that it was better to be an officer. I was ready to get out of the Army after two years. I had accepted a position for teaching math at a local high school, and just at that time I got a phone call from the Pentagon asking me if I wanted to extend my two years in the service to four and teach math at West Point. I went there and I had two very good years of teaching there. I really enjoyed it and I was glad that I went there. It is very exciting to walk into a classroom with a lot of brilliant people. It was exciting to see their minds delve into these very difficult math problems and proofs. But you sort of felt like any idiot could walk in there with any math skill and answer their questions. There were something like thirty-nine of us all teaching freshman calculus course. Everything was standardized, and you just felt like a lot of creativity was never getting used. Here you were teaching all these students and you never made up a test, or if you did, you made it up with a committee.

When I finished my two years of teaching at West Point, I was really excited about teaching math and I had decided to switch from high school and go into college. I knew that I could teach well at college. I didn't feel like going for a doctorate degree then. So I would have to find a four-year school that wanted a person with a master's degree or a two-year college. I just sent applications everywhere all over the country. Fortunately that was back in 1970. There were still some teaching jobs around so I had some choice. I remember going to certain four-year state colleges and their whole interest was, "What is your research, what would you get your doctorate in?" They never once asked me did I like to teach, was I good at teaching. So I shifted gears and really started pursuing more seriously the community college situation.

The community college is like working in three worlds simultaneously, the world of the student, the world of faculty and colleagues, and the world of the administration; and the three are so different. You have people in your classes who are older than your father, people in your classes who are seventeen and very immature emotionally and everything in between. You have people who carry such emotional baggage with them that it is very hard for them to do a simple thing like ask a question. The nub of the student world is really trying to find where the students are in their mathematical ability, and to find effective ways to teach that and get sufficient feedback so that you are in a true kind of emotional dialog for the semester. Once I walked into a class and put my books down and was all set to start class. Two students raised their hands and said they didn't know what in the world we were doing. I ripped up the lesson plan and said, "We will start where you are." That kind of flexibility was a little hard for me to learn because I had just finished teaching two years at West Point.

A lot of students have picked up a mental block that says, last week I didn't understand so I will never catch up . So I try to encourage them that they can catch up, and let them try one or two problems while I am in the office and see if there is any success and if they don't, continue some form of dialog until they do have some success. If a person asks for special favors I try and give the kid the benefit of the doubt. Sometimes I have gotten stung. Kids will say, "I will be out of school for the next two weeks and I want all the lessons in advance. Can I make up the test?" I do it and then I discover the whole thing was a fabricated story. Some student says, "I can't possibly meet you until 3 o'clock," and I make a point of saying, "Yes, but if for some reason you can't make it, please call the office and let me know." And I check and there has been no call and I drive all the way back , sit down with my books and get my notes out and think of what the student's questions might be and wait there for a half hour and the kid never shows up. The next day he says something like "I forgot," or "Gee, I was busy and couldn't get around to it." Most of the time the kids will come but thirty percent of the time they don't and you get hurt.

A lot of times kids have been taught in high school, by unfortunately whoever taught them, that it was disrespectful to ever ask a teacher to explain a problem on the board that you can't understand. Some of them have been told the first day of class, "If you kids sit there and shut up, and don't bug anybody, you will get a C." I have got kids from some of the local high schools and I look on their transcripts and it says they took Algebra II and got B's and they know absolutely nothing.

I am a very very energetic teacher. I come into class and ask if they have any questions about the homework and usually about a third of the period ends up being utilized in that way. I will work through some of the problems on the board . I never sit in class. I am almost always putting problems on the board. I am usually covered with chalk dust at the end of the period. I go through a couple of pieces of chalk every period. My classes are between thirty and thirty-five. Some of us get stuck with a little fuller sections. I don't like them bigger than thirty-five, but it doesn't make an awful lot of difference.

About one-third of the students never had any algebra in high school. The whole idea of using a letter to represent anything is a total mystery. About the other two-thirds have had high school algebra and have failed it or it has been a long time and they have forgotten it. They look at the board, their face wide open, and say, "What in the world are you doing?" I know how they feel and I stop the class and say, "Listen, some of you people are going to feel lost for the next two periods because you never had this before. The course is still designed for you. I will answer all your questions and we will not go too fast for you and you will not get lost, and I know how you feel." It usually helps.

A lot of the times I have encountered a problem here as either a coordinator of a program or in the last three years as the math department chairman where there is something that is flat wrong. I chafe at that, I don't like that, it bugs me. This last semester we had to hire three part-time faculty. I did my homework and I wrote out letters and I collected all the folders for the people who were interested. And in a period of time of five weeks I wanted to get clearance from my division chairman and my dean to say, "This is it, give me the go ahead so I can call them up and say you are teaching the Basic Math I section which meets at ten o'clock, here is a course list." They kept saying we can't decide because we don't know about the budget . I have trouble living with that because I know I should be able to tell a person that you are teaching the course and can plan on it. I find it frustrating and it churns up my emotional energy. There are very few teaching tasks that do frustrate me. I like teaching, that is my happy world. I feel comfortable enough in it that I can pick up a textbook and shoot from the hip. I get frustrated enough in the administrative world sometimes when my best-laid plans get shot down. And this internal frustration honestly makes me wonder how much longer I will want to be a department chairman if I can't resolve it at a better level than I have done the first three years. I really don't think that I will stay at that level. I will just return to being a regular teaching member, because it burns too much of my energy.

I guess I felt a personal responsibility to step in and be the department chairman. Beyond that, there is certainly something to do with my career plans. I am just completing a doctorate. If I should go on to some other level at a four-year college or administration or something else, I felt I needed the administrative kind of experience. Part of it is practical; I find it extremely difficult to live on the salary that they pay me. I feel that one of the options open to me is to move up in administration. I keep thinking through in my mind what I really enjoy doing. I enjoy teaching very much, I don't enjoy administrating too much. People tell me I am successful and I receive that feedback verbally from them. Internally I don't think that is a complete message. Maybe I am doing a surface job of being successful but I am not too happy with myself.

Maybe that is just because I can't live with the high amounts of frustration that administration involves and the problems can't be resolved. There is no other way to solve this situation. I guess maybe the problem is this: in my world of teaching there are very very few unresolved problems. No matter how screwed up they are -- the learning problems--no matter how many students get jammed in your class, no matter how terrible the textbook is, I am able to turn that situation around and make a success and know that I have communicated with the students, look at their final exams, and get letters back the next semester saying you are a fantastic teacher. And there are very few things that I now experience in teaching where I ever feel a real failure, or an internal problem that I can't resolve. If the kid is absent for two months or in the hospital I know how to set up make-up tests for him. I know how to tutor him, I know how to get him back to where he needs to be mathematically. So I live with a lot of successes in teaching and that is encouraging .

A lot of times in the administration there is a no-win situation. You are forced to do something that is wrong or not fair or inequitable or not in the best interest of the student, but it has to be done because some administrator or some legislator has said that it has to be done that way. I find it hard to live with. If I am ever going to be an administrator as a permanent career I am going to have to learn to divorce part of my caring. It is a tough world and some of these things can't be clearly resolved as hard as you try to be clear and satisfy everybody. In administration sometimes you can't and you have to find the best approximation in the situation and don't live with such idealistic views. I intend to finish my doctorate, to keep my eyes and ears open for other opportunities. I perceive that for me the next step of moving upward to administration would be, if I ever did, an assistant dean of faculty at some other community college somewhere. My dream would be to be in an area of curriculum development and faculty professional development and that kind of thing. I do enjoy taking a challenge and bringing order out of chaos. I do enjoy accomplishing a mission. I do enjoy helping somebody and knowing that the program worked out well. So that kind of a motive is there too.

I think that the most important social world is connected to my church, a large group of people that I can share things with on a deeper level and also have some commonality of spiritual values. Two forces are very real in my life that make me strive to have a meaning at my job. One is the force that I guess you call a social prestige type of force that says: "Oh, you only teach at a community college. You are about to get a doctorate, what are you doing here? Is that all the level of math course you get? You only have kids up to calculus two for a semester? You ought to be teaching at a four-year college." And that is perhaps a more significant force of my life because of the track of my education through Harvard graduate school and teaching at West Point and having a lot of colleagues that teach university and in four-year schools and have a doctorate. They have an attitude of discussing the community college as "down there," that it is trying to help the underprivileged students and has watered down academic standards. That force was very clearly explicated one time when I had a friend from a local four-year school see me for the day. He is also in math and we returned to campus and at the end of the day he said, "Boy, you have really got to be committed to teaching to teach in a place like this." He was serious and that was his gut reaction. I catch that a lot from people. So those forces really impact on me, and they really cause me to dig deeply as to why I am here. Is it really worth it, is this really the best place that you should be? The status system that says you are this quality person and if you are in this kind of job and if you are a university professor you are in a different elite status plane and just to realize that this is not a social ladder--I don't become a better person if all of a sudden I resign here and become head of the math department at a university. I know that deep down, at least I know it intellectually. To honestly live that is sometimes a little tough. You have to think that through. The way I have helped to resolve that is to see that the people that I know who really and truly rid themselves of that kind of stigma and social status structure seem to be the most free and whole living people that I know.

We moved from one neighborhood to another in the same town three years ago. Picked up a whole new set of friends. We moved to kind of a nicer neighborhood. A lot of them are rather well off financially. Where we were before, when we got our first house, we were poor, poorer than we are now, and we could only afford a modest home in a less desirable part of the city where the lot sizes were small, where there were a lot of blue-collar people. There were very few professional people on the street.

The high school dropout who works as a full-time painter for a living will think that the community college teacher is pretty great. So I didn't get so much negative input from the neighbors then about my job in that environment. Where I am now most of the people are either college professors or they are the director of data processing or editor of this, or the machine supervisor at some big company. Some of the comments that they make give me the impression that they think that the community college teachers are beneath them. They don't treat me as being beneath them. I don't feel personally treated that way, but sort of the way they discuss my job gives me the impression that they have that perception of my job. In retrospect I didn't really realize that there was an absence of negative input about my job where I was before. I think a lot of people say that community college is wonderful and it is a wonderful job that you are doing, on the surface, but then they say little things with subtle hints and things come out that give you a deep-seated impression that they think your job is not really that great . My belief is that if I could physically take them through one day of my teaching experience, let them see everything that I do , that it would totally erase, I think, their perception. The watered down standard of the community college is not one based on reality and one that I don't think that my discussions would ever quite erase. If they ever send their kids here or if they ever walk through the halls, I think I can show them what an exciting world that it can be.

With a school of one hundred and eight faculty I see one source of stress on faculty is that the layers of communications and responsibility are thicker than we would like and probably thicker than the leaders of the institution would like,as far as direct outside forces from outside the college influencing the college. So that causes stress. In the community college there is less and less faculty involvement in the total daily operation of the college every year. When I first came here, there were about the same number of full-time teaching faculty as we have now, maybe five more. We had two counselors for the whole school, two librarians for the whole school, maybe four deans, one president, eight secretaries, and that was it. The faculty did everything. We counseled the students, we did this and did that, we were just involved in the whole mesh of things. It is easier to have that holistic view of the college if you are dealing with financial aid problems of students, if you are counseling students. Now there is a structure. We have nine full-time counselors, we have librarians and I don't know how many there are in total--probably seven or eight; every dean has an assistant dean. Some of the deans have two assistant deans and an associate dean. All the directors have an assistant director --director of financial aid, associate director of financial aid, director of student affairs. Everybody has just compiled other job descriptions. There is far more structure now so what started to be a college of one hundred and five teachers and eighteen staff and a president and four deans is now a president and fifteen deans over one hundred staff members of the college. So that the staff has actually reached the point where, exclusive of the secretaries, the staff for the college is as large as the teaching faculty, and it has compartmentalized and pigeonholed job descriptions a lot more, and has made it harder to function as a team. What sustains me is I have to feel and know to a pretty thorough degree that what I am doing is worthwhile,that it has meaning,and that I am doing a good quality job. The letters, the comments, the fact that a lot of kids pass the course, don't sustain me; they are just one of many indicators that I need.

There are some limitations with this building. I will feel better about my teaching and I will be more looked up to if we get a nice campus. For several years I ran with the idea that hey, you make any community college, it is no matter what environment you are in. It really isn't important. You can make any grubby place into a learning experience. Now I honestly feel that a whole lot of learning that we want to happen here doesn't happen because we don't have a new campus. There is nothing magical about a new campus, but I think that a new campus would be an exciting tool that says to the student that learning is important, look at the environment we have created to facilitate it. And I know that some of the kids from the city want nothing more than to break away from their world because they live in the city , they work in town and they walk up the street to this building and it doesn't seem very different, it is not too much of a place to study, and they go home as soon as they are finished. I have really come full circle to thinking that the most important thing that we can do in the future is build a new campus. It is really no longer for me, I think the kids need it.

Profile

SHELLEY WEISS

(Shelley Weiss, in her thirties, teaches mathematics at a suburban community college in California. She was interviewed at her home in the summer of 1981.)

I managed to graduate high school by the time I was sixteen. I was always a very good student in school, always motivated to be a college student. I was one of the students who did not excel in one field over another, but did well in all of them.

I have a twin brother. No other sister or brother. It is interesting that I turned to mathematics in college, because that was never an interest of mine in high school. There was a lot of competition between us. All the teachers knew us. I kind of skipped over all the hassles. It was very high-pressured in my school,... a very small private school more like being in a summer camp because of the small size. It was very difficult, very cliquey,very academic, very political. The first demonstration was a mock sort of rites of spring. I really needed more structure. I would say the total population , seventy-five to eighty-five percent, were college bound. Competition was very great; there were scholarships, letters of recommendation, all of that, so there was a lot of pressure to go on [to college].

I didn't get a lot of guidance and I will say high school counselors are not very helpful. They took more or less the top three, four, or five people and worked with them. I mean the others, it was just, if you can make it into college, fine. I wasn't the top student and so I didn't get a lot of support there. And then you know I was sixteen, I was really young. I was confused. My parents were older and they just didn't really want children, I don't think. They had them but they didn't know what to do with them. So I think it was there I was on my own at a very young age without having a lot to fall back on.

I remember I was home from college on vacation talking to my friend Judy and she said, "Oh, I'm going to go into math and maybe computers," and I said, "How come?" And she says, "Well, I mean, you can just do anything." You know we were fantasizing about gosh when I get out of college I'm just going to travel all over, and go all over the world. I said, "I don't know, math is so boring at times." and she said, "Well, but think about it. Everyone goes into teaching," she says, "My mother is a teacher, everyone is a teacher. I mean that's all women do. What are you going to do, go into English? What can you do with English?" I thought about it and I thought, well, she is right. Everyone does teach and everyone does go into English and Humanities and has this liberal arts "education" and what are they trained to do when they leave? Nothing. It appealed to me more than science because I didn't like the laboratory aspect of science. Math isn't technical.

I started taking all these math classes. As soon as everyone else got to college, they just stopped. They found out that they didn't need it, and they said, "I'm never taking another math class as long as I live." I didn't feel that way about it. So I took three semesters and I was a math major because no one else was taking it. So you know, I just kind of, it evolved. I just fell into it. I became competent at something that was easy enough, but it wasn't a real love of mine. There weren't many women in math. And there weren't very many people in my math class ever. You know, English lecture halls would have three hundred people.

It was a real social time. We all felt different from the rest of the world. This was during the time of all that change because of the war. I was always treated special. I was frequently the only woman in mathematics. I got a lot of attention. I kind of was still living in this other world, a very social world and yet doing mathematics and I got along. Not only was I younger, I mean they were aware of how young I was, but I was the only woman in most of my classes. Math was really easy. And it served a really important purpose because of all the chaos at the university--demonstrations, people getting angry--that all spread across the country. When that would just build up too much I would just go to sleep for three straight days, just escaping from everything. So I really could have worked much harder. I chose not to do that. I did a minimal amount to get by, but it took less from me.

By the time I graduated I was just turned nineteen. Graduation was in January and I remember I took the graduate record exam. I was accepted to graduate school.I felt I had a whole lifetime to work so graduate school seemed like the appropriate thing to do. Also I had gotten a lot of pressure. My father wanted me to get a doctorate in whatever I wanted and he was willing to pay. It turned out that I got this teaching assistantship, so I didn't need him to pay for that. But he was very generous always with my brother and me. That is his way of dealing with having twins, he always treated us the same. If my brother had to do well, so did I, if my brother was going to graduate school, so did I. So I thought it would be an appropriate thing for me to do,and also my main reason was I just loved the people I was with and wanted to stay there and they were all still going to school.

What happened at the university is really the most wonderful, the most significant time in my life. It was the happiest place, it was a very exciting time. There was a lot of political activity. It was very strong in that school. You became more politically conscious, fighting the war. I lived in a dormitory for one semester just because I didn't know when I got there what the situation was and I immediately left and lived in a "kitchen privilege." A lot of my friends were in history and political science and they were very active. Some of them were members of SDS or started the first draft-resistance union. I wasn't in those organizations. I was in mathematics; that really typified my involvement. Although I did get involved when we had TA strikes in protest of the war. We closed down our classes. I mean, nominal things like that.

Being a graduate student in math, it was fun, you didn't have to write a lot of papers. You only had these exams periodically. I was a teaching assistant, so I taught classes. I was responsible for teaching a pre-calculus class on my own. That was my first teaching experience. It was wonderful. It was a pre-calculus to prepare people for calculus and we did a little bit with limits and series and I supposedly had no supervisor, but basically I did all the lecturing. The whole class met three times a week and I came in and did a presentation and made up exams. I was younger than most of the students. It was predominantly engineering students and the class was almost entirely male students. I just didn't relate to them very well. I just did the work. I went in and taught the class. I felt I did a better job than most of the TA's, partially because as a woman I was more sensitive to how things should be explained. I don't know if it is being a woman, but I felt I was more sensitive. It was a job, and it was a separate part of my life and it was fun to have that responsibility.

My advisor was a really kindly man, very easy going, supportive sort of person, much more interested in his research than in motivating me. And I think had he related differently to me I might have gone on more seriously. I did independent work with him and he was almost too unstructured--it was like you do what you want. I needed more structure and he didn't do that. So some weeks, I'd say, "Well, I haven't worked as hard as I should this week," and he goes, "Oh, that's okay, just come in another time." So I felt that he didn't take seriously what I was doing. And that suited me at the time. In looking back I have a little bit of anger toward the faculty. They had their favorites and they were almost all men. There were only two women graduate students who went through and were getting their Ph.D.'s when I was there, so there was definitely a paternalistic feeling toward me, because I was young and also I played into that too, myself. It's oh Shelley's good, you know, competent, but no interest in motivating me. But they did that not just with women, they did that with my only close friend in mathematics, they did that with him. They picked out of each class the star students and those were the students they encouraged.

I got tired of mathematics. It just didn't seem interesting. There was so much else happening and that seemed isolated from it all. I thought, what are these numbers, what is this system, I am sitting up here doing all this, what does it mean, you know. There is a whole world out there, things are happening, and at a certain point it stopped being relevant. I felt it was just games, it was people sitting around having these mental games who were not involved in the real world. The only thing that kept me there even one semester beyond my master's was the teaching. I really loved teaching.

I think I lost confidence in my ability to do the Ph.D. I could operate on a fairly easy level and get through that, but I really felt I didn't have that genius or that extra creativity to get my Ph.D. Part of the reason for that was that I was working with in my office one man who was just brilliant and when I first started graduate school, he was working toward finishing his doctorate. He devoted his entire life, it seemed, to doing that work. He was there morning, noon and night. He literally slept there . Sometimes I'd get in there early in the morning and he had stayed up all night and just slept more or less in there. Slept on his desk. His devotion was incredible to me. When the pressure got great he would disappear for four days and go on these drunken things. I realized the devotion it took to do something really original and great. And I didn't know if I had that. I didn't know if I wanted to put that kind of energy in. And the only female models that I had, there were two women: one woman was socially totally inept, tactless, workaholic, and the other woman was somehow never around. She always seemed to be on sabbatical or leave. The people who I was close to were these very brilliant graduate students.

I had never thought twice about whether I knew material. I realized that my way of going through it had not been fastidious as it should have been, that really I was not focused on it completely. That I had managed to get by and got A's and B's but lacked the concentration . I was very good at playing the game, knew what I had to do but my heart hadn't been in it. When I made the decision to leave, nobody said anything and one of the last days I was there, they had gotten a whole bouquet of roses as a good-by present. I think about it these past years and I think, well, what might have been better would be for someone to sit down and say, what were you doing? But I think they picked up that my heart wasn't in it and nobody said anything about it. I liked the interactive part of it, but I didn't like the solitary part. I saw all these men who were there for day after day just alone. Maybe if someone had been more encouraging and said, well, you have so much talent, why don't you do this, or put more pressure on me, but at that point you're a graduate student, you're not expected to be babied or encouraged.

In the summer of 1967, my roommate and I came out to California. I couldn't believe how beautiful it was and at that point I thought I didn't want to go back to graduate school. When my father found out that I was going to quit , he refused to send me the money and said the only thing he would give me was a plane ticket to go back . Because he wasn't educated, he had a strong value on that. I was very ambivalent about it and thought, well, another year won't make much difference and so I went back, but I knew that I wanted to come out here as soon as I left. So I had the beginnings of this split from this whole close-knit family group. I went back and it was a painful seven months of separating and I was going to be the first one of all my friends to leave and it was very difficult. But I knew, somehow I guess I felt, it was time to get out of this whole school-room situation and so in January of 1969 I came out here. That was a month before I turned twenty-one.

I worked as a programmer for nine months. That unfortunately was the wrong choice. It was a choice out of safety because I felt I was on my own and I didn't want to ask my parents for any money if I didn't have to. And the shock of going from a place where my friends were all very radical into this space-science type place was incredible. The first six months I just felt like crying every day. I thought, what am I doing? This is horrible and I thought, well, if you leave school and have to work, this is a grind. So I put up with it not realizing that it was just the wrong choice. I finally decided I have to get another kind of job. I got a job working for a business organization. I was hired to sell a program that schools could use for tutorial work.They stuck me with these horrible jobs in the beginning, writing tech manuals and trying to decipher the gibberish that some of the programs people write, totally incomprehensible. In the course of working there and going out to these schools I got in touch with a really bright teacher in one of the schools who told me about this program that taught to elementary school children abstract alegebraic concepts in this very exciting way. He arranged for me to see a class and I went and watched this woman teaching this class of third graders higher mathematics in this fun kind of discovery technique where kids were just jumping out of their seats wildly, they were so happy about the program. I started teaching in this program and I finally decided that I absolutely hated business and would like to teach. And simultaneously I found out about a community college opening. And they hired me part-time at night, teaching at this college.

This math enrichment program for children which we called project SEED was geared toward minority children, so it was only put in schools which were economically disadvantaged. It had a white missionary, helping, and political aspect to it which appealed to me. I thought it's a way of getting children who hated math interested in the subject that everyone thinks is boring and they were mainly minority children who usually don't go on because they don't do well in those subjects. I started out teaching classes and from there I went to be a supervisor trainer and I had two or three elementary school classes that I went to every day in different schools. I presented material to them which was somewhat algebraic in content. We also taught them about fractions, but it was done in this fun technique and basically what it consisted of was going in and putting patterns on the board and making it a game.

My first experience in industry had been very rigid and seemed too routine. I was working with mainly engineering types. There were very few women working in a professional capacity. There was one woman who was very hard to talk to, but all the other women were secretaries. We were dealing with people who wanted computer programs for their inventory. And I thought, who cares whether Sears gets their bills out five days faster than they do. It seemed like it wasn't doing anything for humanity, for the world. They weren't helping anyone. And I was still, for a person who wasn't very political, I was coming from this history and these viewpoints that were: what are you doing, what about all these poor people who are out there, who don't have jobs. You know, the white man's guilt , I've been fortunate and I'm not from a poor background. If I were, then I would have anger, you know, that whole racial issue. And I guess I did have a social sense from a very young age in some way. I don't know whether it is being Jewish, growing up in a community where people knew what it was like to be persecuted especially since it was an older Jewish community that remembered Hitler. If they had not experienced it they knew what had happened. I saw business as being unimportant.

At that time most women, if you had a degree in something, people said, "Well , go teach, be a teacher." And I thought, I don't want to do that. I mean that is what everyone tells you to do. I thought, what can I do with it, so I thought, well, computers. I mean what else can I do with mathematics? I can do research, but the only places where you do research are in Washington or universities. You get your doctorate and you sit in your office and I had moved away from that, so here I had this degree which would give me a job anywhere in the world. But the price I had to pay for it was to do something that was math-related. So I thought, I'll try computers. Well, who needs computers? Industry and business, and so I got involved with that, making $75,000 a year. I found it boring after doing mathematics--mathematics seemed so much more alive compared to computers which I know a computer person would look at me and say, "You are crazy." But I thought, "There is a whole history behind this, there's a theory, there's an elegance." I left graduate school to sit here and do loop K equals N to N plus one. That just seemed ridiculous to me.

In the company they just left me alone. Nobody would tell me anything. I asked someone a question . They said, "Oh, that's okay, I'll do it. I can zip it off real fast." There was no one who had that sense of "Wait a minute, here's a person." No one who cared about sharing or encouraging. The worst part was more than rigid, how secretive they were. They didn't want to tell you what their codes meant because they figure if other people don't know, they are indispensable. I would say, "Let's see now, would you explain this," and they would zip off these numbers, "Well, can't you see it's a K13 and it's this and it does this," and it's like the old-style math teacher who'd write up furiously formulas and then students would say, "I don't see the steps." Well, he left out forty steps, but he won't tell you what the steps were. And at that time I wasn't ready to be assertive; I just saw it as discouraging.

At the community college I have taught all levels of mathematics from arithmetic through differential equations. Each class varies tremendously. I have a lot of reliance on the discovery technique in my classes, putting up patterns and having the people kind of recognize those patterns, a lot of classroom participation which has to be adjusted depending on each situation. I mean in calculus you have to put up a lot more work quicker and you have to get different responses. You can't wait for as much participation at times, versus I teach a women's re-entry class and it is all discovery, completely. A typical class begins with my coming in and just putting up some puzzle and having them look at it and we start talking about it and people start discovering what is happening, seeing the patterns, and that I really enjoy. Those are my favorite classes when I can do that. This is going on my twelfth year at teaching mathematics at the community college level. (First four years were part time.) So I really have gotten stuck somewhat and I have been thinking of career changing. I'm not as excited about teaching the mathematics. I'm not as excited about doing the research into different ideas for classes and different techniques.

I guess I have been putting a lot more effort into classroom dynamics and personalities of students and dealing with group personalities and thinking more about what kinds of responsibilities I want students to take. In the beginning I took complete responsibility for their learning. I felt like if they didn't learn, it was my fault, I was doing something wrong. And now I've moved, in the last eight years especially, into feeling that they have more of a responsibility for what they learn. I have to treat them more as adults in almost a business world where they have commitments and they are making contracts to fulfill certain work. A lot of what you are hearing is just, I'm tired, you know. I am burnt out. I haven't had a summer and I'm about ready to go on sabbatical next year. I am really thinking of career changes, so it's not as interesting as it was. Now this community college is fantastic. The people here are incredible. People are always thinking of ways of connecting different subjects. Even recently someone said, maybe when I come back from sabbatical they were interested in our doing something with sociology and math. There is a lot of energy despite how many years people have been here. Their main concern is teaching, and thinking of new ways of making it interesting for themselves as well as students. I mean the college is like a home. It is a very strong support system.

What's it like to teach math in the women's re-entry group? It is the best, it is always the most positive class, the most positive experience in teaching. I enjoy seeing people who always hated mathematics get very excited and involved in it. And it is much easier than most instructors and professors of mathematics make it. There is a whole mystique around it, there is a certain kind of language that's very, you know, it's just real hard to get through. It makes people stand away from it and feel, oh, this isn't related to life, it has no substance. In the women's re-entry we work with those concepts that are fairly sophisticated but we do it in this very step-wise sequential manner and I do it a lot through discovery teaching, where I put up patterns and they start getting excited at seeing things and then later on I introduce the vocabulary. After about the first month they start coming up to me and saying, "I am really excited." They start looking at magazines for math-type puzzles, they start watching television about science programs on educational television, they come over to me constantly and tell me. "You know, this is really fun, I spent ten hours on this project, but I loved it." They start introducing their children to it, they start talking to their husbands about it, it really has dramatic changes in their life. And part of the reason is that they are very ready to deal with that anxiety. Also I really --you know, this is going to sound not humble, but I know it is true--I'm really supportive. I guess my way with them is very good and it just cuts down the mystique of it very quickly. I love the age level; for the most part I get women who are in their forties and fifties, some are in their thirties and some are in their twenties, but most of the women are older. I walk in and I'm very understanding from the first day. I tell them I realize that they have an anxiety about this and I express the kinds of things I heard women say about mathematics and the blocks that they have and then I say, "You'll see this class is very different. We will be real supportive of one another and we'll do really fun topics. You'll get a sense that math isn't just sitting around with a pencil in your hand and a piece of paper, but cutting out things, looking in nature and finding patterns, so we do a lot of more manipulative types of things."I like it because I have all this flexibility of what I can introduce. I can skip around topics; I can, in fact in that class I do, create my own topics. I make up all these ways of dealing with what would be boring types of mathematics and we make it into puzzles type of mathematics. And they remember that and it lives with them, versus, "Okay, this is how you do it, you divide by two." It's not fun when there is nothing playful about it.

In other classes I still teach very differently than most of the other faculty because I can't stand standing up and just talking. I will show them how to do something, but it is always interspersed with their working a problem or trying a few steps with a lot of questions. Who can tell me what goes next? What if I change this? What if I do this? A lot of interaction that way, but we are limited by time. Some times it may take a whole week to get at a basic concept in calculus when in that one week we were supposed to get at eight concepts. In the women's class I can go off on tangents. Somebody asks a question and I say, "Oh, that's really interesting, that reminds me of this, " so it is very creative. Unfortunately in other classes I really feel the pressure that these students need a certain amount of material, and if they don't get it, then I'm putting them at a disadvantage in the next course. And also there is a lot of monitoring and I have a very rigid department. Any new ideas that get brought up immediately hit these shut-off valves in their heads. A lot of them were high school teachers before. There is only one way of doing something, they have done it that way for thirty years, it works, so they are going to continue.

The difference between these people and the people that I really like at the college is they came through as high school teachers who didn't like the discipline problems in high school so they go to a community college. Which is different than all these other people at the college who came from dropping out of doctoral programs, who really had visions of doing some other thing. I don't know one woman who has come from a high school background, aside from this older woman in my department who I like, and that's because what else could a woman do years ago?

In the last two years we have hired four new people. Prior to that there were fourteen members of the department. Three women, including myself. One woman retired who was very creative. In fact, she was the one who started the women's re-entry program and then there is another one who is an ex-army officer, whose typical comment is, "You know, I don't understand why women think that men are discriminating against them. I get along with the guys all right, they always treat me fine." I mean this is you know, the other women in the department.

I am definitely feminist, although I don't speak very strongly in that direction. All of my friends are. The women's programs at this community college have had a tremendous battle because of some very chauvinistic men who felt that there shouldn't be a special program for women, it should be for both men and women. Without realizing that the women faculty here are the energy of the college, and men are not trying to create re-entry programs. I had a sixty-five -year-old man who stayed in three of my classes because he got a kind of support from me because I know how to deal with re-entry students. There are so many men like him here that if there were a men's re-entry that would be really important, but there is a core group of men who would rather destroy the women's programs than create a men's re-entry program.

The main thing that I see that I have done is by being a woman in mathematics it destroys a lot of stereotyping of both the young men and the young women who are in most of my classes. Certainly it is appreciated by the women in the women's re-entry , but the main thing I think is that my approach to the mathematics , my openness, my lack of rigidity about using "the rigorous terms" has really changed a lot of students that I see. Because they come and tell me things like that. Like one of my classes was a ninety-person lecture class and when I walked in the first day somebody said, "That's our math teacher?" People are always saying to me, "You make it seem so easy." The other side of it is when I teach a class like differential equations, I have a lot of difficulty with those students because they are all engineering students who are at the very end of the community college experience. They have been taking physics, chemistry, and all these other math classes, and they are keyed in to a certain rigid way of dealing. And I have a lot of problems with those classes, with those students. They are predominantly men who don't think they are anxious, feel they are good in mathematics, which is often incorrect. They are upset at times because I am not rigid. I am very stepwise but they almost get annoyed if I do too much work to help them.

For the first five years I must admit I was really quiet. I was a polite little girl. They treated me in fact that way, when I first came here, because I was younger. The average age of the faculty is fifty to fifty-five. When I was hired I was the youngest faculty member on the campus. I still am the third youngest faculty member. I wish I had more peers my age who went through the whole sixties, Vietnam, college experiences, to relate to. Those of us who are in that age are very close. But there are so few of us hired in the last ten years. On the one hand I'm the one who organizes cards when people retire, I'm the one who organizes the gifts, so I have that part of me and yet here's this other aspect of me, that they just can't really deal with. I'm not a traditional person. I don't follow their rules, you know, and it's difficult.

The first four or five years here I thought I was in heaven. I thought it was the best teaching job you could ever have anywhere. My first few years here people would always come by and say, "How do you like it? Is everything going well?" And then they would tell me, "You know, I had a student in my office and they told me that they are taking your class and they just love you." My best friends are other faculty members here. I mean it is wonderful, everything that you could want, like a family situation. Students are wonderful, they thank you at the end of the class. They give you presents. They come by and talk to you. It is a wonderful place.

About two years ago my father became ill, and last year died. And that started the beginning of re-evaluation of my entire life and my relationship with people. Up until that point I had been really trying to be a "good little girl". Going out of my way writing workbooks for free. Other people, released time or sabbatical--I volunteered to do it for free. I started colloquiums. So about two years ago when my father was dying I realized that I had put up with a lot of his rigidity, as a child; I realized that I was putting up with a lot of rigidity in my department. I just started re-evaluating my life and I started looking at the situation and realizing that I was a full member of that department and that this was my life, that I really enjoyed teaching here and that these people were stopping the school and the department from doing really interesting things and that they were denying students a lot of more exciting experiences. And I started bucking them consciously. I just started getting really angry and stopped being the sort of person who went along and tried to be nice to everyone . And just started asking more directly for things that I wanted. But it came out with a lot of anger and an incredible confrontation last year in which there was an election for department chairman. There had never been a woman department head. It turned out that I am very happy I didn't get it because of some other personal things going on in my life. But it was very symbolic and it has shaken the department and the department is not going to be the same.

It's frustrating to realize that I have been here eight full-time years and there is all this stuff that I would like to do. When you bring up an idea, I like people to say, "Oh, that's good, why don't you just try it. You know we are behind you." I need a lot of that kind of support. I mean you try things and you get resistance rather than support. I don't know if I want to stay in that kind of environment. If I want to try my own textbook, I can't. There is one textbook that you must use for any course and the department votes. So I have people voting on textbooks for courses they have never taught.

The women on campus are fantastic, they are very energetic. And the more I got involved, I realized how ridiculous they were, all these men who were fighting a women's program just because it had the word "women" in front of it. I also noticed the paternalistic way I was treated and I also, because I don't like to make waves, allowed myself to be treated that way. I wanted to do well. I was very polite but they always made me feel uncomfortable. They were so reserved. And then meetings. Right from the beginning I could see you don't say certain things around them. So I set it up to be treated that way too. By not asserting myself from the beginning. I had two years before I had tenure. I didn't want to spoil that because from the beginning there were good comments from students. And then my techniques were different and I took on all the courses that the rigids don't like. The courses that are more unstructured where you have to deal with the anxiety. I kept my office hours at times when students could get there so there were a lot of people coming by to see me. Because I made an effort to tell them, "Look, if you need help, come by. I'm here."

I remember one year some one said, "We have to reorganize our arithmetic class." I said, "I will do it if someone else will work with me." That was a concept that they didn't understand. And that was a problem in graduate school also. People working on their own so much. I don't like that. One man who was retired volunteered. His idea of working together is, he said, "You do the first eight and I'll do the next eight." They had been teaching so long that they had all gone their own ways and a lot of the people in the department get there at eight and refused to stay a minute past noon. I didn't care how long I stayed . I always took rotten schedules. It was my background of just compromising, you know. I had a very difficult father and you just had to do that to get along with him. So I was used to doing that with difficult people. I would just kind of lay low because I liked certain parts of the situation. I love this college and I love the students. It was like, if I have a horrible meeting I would go into a class and just get all this warmth and all this love from doing a good job. It's a family place. I know, it is. There are quite a few people that I know who sense this college that way. It's really a community. People are very involved with one another's lives and it's more than just a job that you go to and you leave. Part of work is definitely a sense of community. A lot of us are involved in one another's lives. The woman's re-entry program was started by a core group of women from all different departments. The woman in my department who has retired now was involved in getting a math class in that program.

Most of my energy this year has been in thinking about career changes. I had an opportunity to maybe be a stockbroker. I took an investment class and this one man was really impressed with me. And he encouraged me so I spent some time going to some workshops. I had an option this summer of working there doing some odd stuff, answering phones or whatever. But I decided that I wasn't ready to do that right now.

I'm thirty-four. I've been teaching for twelve years now. It serves certain purposes in my life. As I said, you know, it is like a family type of community. I don't know if I need that anymore. I always wanted to help people in some way, so teaching a subject that people dislike and getting them over those barriers was something that appealed to me. But I realize that I don't have people in my field who are really interesting to deal with at this college. I'm tired of mathematics. Believe it or not, mathematics was never my love. I just kind of stumbled into it. I have spent a lot of years doing this subject that is not necessarily my first interest. So you know there has been a lot of re-evaluation of what was my motivation on a deep psychological level for going in that field. I tried to figure some of that out. Part of it was being competitive with my brother, my twin brother, who did very well in math and science. Part of it was that it was easy, it was an easy way out into a career that I knew would always provide money and my own support because what was really important to me when I was a child was that when I left home I would never have to get support from my parents beyond a certain time. And I didn't from graduate school on, never.

I am a survivor. I have a strong survival mechanism and from a very young age I knew I did not want to stay at home. So as soon as I could I severed those cords and it happened in graduate school as soon as I had my assistantship. I wanted that independence, just had a very strong urge for that.

I won't get married for economic security, absolutely. If there are things that I want, I'll go and change my job. If I want something, I'll go for it myself. Children? That's a difficult decision. I hadn't wanted children up until recently. My mother has this little scenario about how I should get married. She herself was forty-three when she had us as children. A very mixed message. My father's dying brought us closer. Mothers and daughters have funny relationships oftentimes. There's a little edge of hostility and jealousy and I think that's where hers was coming from.

Part of what I was hoping to do on sabbatical was try out a new career. I set up my sabbatical to do something that would be very helpful to the school which I can do easily. Writing textbook material will be easy enough for me because I do like to write. What I was hoping was that I would try out a new career. See if I really am interested, you know. I thought for a while it was going to be investment, the stockbroker thing. It may be something in psychology because that is a real interest of mine, too. Maybe going back to school and taking classes toward a master's in psych or something. You know there are a few options that I have. At this point I feel like I'm at a crossroads where there is a moving into a different career which might be more exciting and then there is this whole family issue, and it's not that the two are mutually exclusive. But where I put my energy this year will have to be one or the other.

I have sensed in the years that I have been here that people are really looking toward retirement, even the dynamic people are burning out. They are getting older, you know, they have other concerns in their life. They are not pushing as hard for certain issues, they are more willing to compromise. I don't know how much it's worth it for me to fight for very small victories. The other thing that's been really hard on me is that every year that we come back, more and more faculty members are getting ill or dying. As the years have gone by I have seen people just get tired and say they're going to let the women's program go because it's too much of a struggle and those who are left struggling are all fifty-five or late forties. Well, I feel that I have gotten older in that way, too. That I'm not willing--well, this is my twelfth year teaching and I'm not tired of dealing with the kids and the people, they are really fun. I am tired of teaching mathematics. I had a lot of energy there for five years and then it just slowly got drummed out. It's like you never bring up anything new or experimental because it's a fight for tiny little things. So that you don't even want to attempt really big changes. If they're going to fight as to whether or not you want to use a different book in a class, what's the fight going to be like if you want a whole real, huge, math anxiety workshop. I mean it is such a fight that I have started to give up and look into other directions.

If I were at a university in mathematics, all I would be doing is mathematics. Now there are some people at four-year colleges who are doing some experimental things. Well, maybe it might be different at a place like State. I have two friends who had worked on this project SEED for children. Both have Ph.D's. One woman is a go-getter; she just went out and got all these grants and she is doing this "math without fear." She had done animation films on math, I mean she is really experimental. Now I just recently thought more about that when I found out what this woman had done, but there's no set-up in our system for people working under grants. I don't know anyone who's gotten a grant to do something in the classroom. It isn't in the system.

Now there is such a thing as reduced load if you put in for released time. This other man and I, when there was a need for an arithmatic workbook, he got released time and I did it for free. I mean certain things I don't even think about asking for and that's, well, I don't mind doing it, that's part of my job and that's interesting. There could be released time but not for a math anxiety workshop. The department would come in and say, "No, that's something we don't need. We need Shelley to teach math classes."

So I feel like up in the air; there is a sense of flux. I don't know in what direction. I've got thirty-one more years until retirement. The thing that I liked about the mathematics was I liked demystifying it, I liked helping people. But I've been doing this for twelve years of teaching and that's eighteen years in an area that I'm not that crazy about. I mean it's interesting and I can do it, but it's like I have to think about my life and I'm thinking where will I find the growth that I want. You know, do I want to, say, even write a book. It's a tremendous outlay of energy. Is that something that I want to do? Or maybe what I want to do is think about moving into a different arena completely. I mean it might be more interesting for me to be in a business environment where I am dealing on a whole other level of people. I mean my teaching is down, I know how to deal with groups of people, I know how to set up the class, I am very organized. Am I going to spend thirty-one years walking in and out of classrooms every day? If I am going to stay in teaching it's going to have to change very drastically.

I am not intellectually stimulated by going in and teaching my classes at the community college. That's basically it. I think most of this started coming up when my father was dying, and when my father died it brought up a lot of things for me. It made me start thinking about my own life, about what things I wanted, the things I did because I thought I had to, the things I did to compensate for others. And the teaching no longer seemed valid to me, or wasn't what I felt I needed, wasn't a direction that I want to move in. In thinking about it, my choices have been not well - thought-out by any means. They have been really reactions to situations that I didn't like, rather than motivated from things that I really did like. That's my tendency to do that. I ran away to school because I didn't like my situation at home. I went into mathematics because it seemed everybody was discouraging about journalism. I got all these awards in school and none of them were in math and science. I mean it was English, music, Spanish. And my brother has all these math science ones. How did I get involved in that? I mean, that wasn't even an interest of mine back then. I don't know. Part of it was a competitive reaction, with my brother. And the other part was this friend who said, "Look, if you want freedom and you want to have a job anywhere in the world, then you should do this. that's what I'm going to do." And it made sense.

I am going to be thirty-five and this is a transition state, I think. It's a strong one for all the women I know my age. You have an internal time clock about children and if you have put off making that decision or you decided not to, tentatively, I think that becomes a much more crucial issue and then the question comes, well, let me put it this way. At this point I don't want children, but if someone said, "All right, go and have your tubes tied" I wouldn't do that, at this age. I guess I feel like there is this fence, or a door, eight doors and two main doors. In which direction? It's like, well, how definite are you about your child issue and then about career? My own internal psychological limitations have pushed me in a certain route in my life and now I don't feel them as much. I feel more unlimited. I think if the woman's movement was around when I was growing up, at sixteen I would never have chosen to be a math teacher even at a college. In terms of a woman's job that has a lot of prestige. I might have been a doctor. There wasn't that image, there wasn't that role model. I mean, you know, we talked about my mother; the greatest thing was when I became a teacher. That is what she always wanted me to do, because that was a picture that she had of when you were doing good with your life. You weren't a secretary, you weren't a nurse. I guess what I am dealing with right now is that a lot of the choices that I made in my life were out of insecurity and I want to make sure that I'm recognizing that so that I don't make the same choices out of insecurity now.

Sometimes I do things because of not feeling good enough about myself. Taking an easier way out, or not pushing hard enough in a direction I really wanted. I think the journalism is a good statement that way, that was my love. I wrote for years, that's all I did was enter contests and write. I wrote from sixth grade on. But somehow I allowed myself to get discouraged. I had an aunt that said, "Oh," she said, "it's too impossible. If you don't know anyone, you'll never get a job on a newspaper." All I heard for months and months from my mother, from my aunt, but especially from my aunt was about you don't know anyone, you'll never get a job. She would say, "I'm telling you this for your own good. I don't want you to be hurt."I don't have enough, I'm not bright enough to get my doctorate. Yet it all came so easily. But I never felt that I was really gifted and there wasn't any one there supporting that. I want to do a lot of things. I think that is my problem and I don't focus in on one.

I see teaching as being a compromise on my talents and what I can really do for myself. Not that teaching always is, but in my situation teaching is somewhat of a security. But there is no intellectual stimulation here. That's part of what I am looking around for. And a real easy way of doing that is to immediately change careers and get into something else--that's a real fast way of being stimulated intellectually. Learning you know, just going through the wonder of learning a whole new field. It's the challenge of it. I mean there are different ways of growing and one way is to stay in a situation that takes on all the different nuances and you live through all levels of it. Another is to change and try different things and I don't know which one fits for me. My tendency has always been to try new things, that's much more exciting. It is difficult staying with something and making it work. And sometimes you can look at it and say, well, it's out of cowardliness that you stay with it , I mean this is a hard job to give up. The teaching is easy enough that you can run your own business on the side or you can write books on your subject or you can do research. But it's so secure sometimes it's scary. It is a nice salary, it's pleasant enough, but I don't know if I'm growing, being here.

Profile

MURRAY GREEN

(Murray Green, in his thirties, teaches mathematics at a metropolitan community college in Massachusetts. He was interviewed in his office in the spring of 1980.)

I finished with graduate school December , 1972. I moved here for no particular reason. I knew some people here --it was supposed to be a nice city and I didn't want to stay around the New York area. I wasn't going to get any kind of teaching job starting in January so I devoted the entire spring to working in a factory and applying for jobs everywhere in the country. I just got a huge list of every school in the world and wrote them all letters and sent them all my resume and got very few responses. There were very few jobs available in 1972 and 1973. As it turned out I got a job here because it was a brand new school. It had the most openings of any math department of the entire country probably because it had no math department. This was the first place at that time to offer me a job and since it was the only job offer I had, not being a complete fool, I took the job.

I started college as a math major. My first two years I got nothing but A's in math courses. The math department was going nuts. Look at this guy, he is getting all A's. At some point in my junior year I decided I didn't like math anymore and so I just started just getting by in math courses and getting C's and that kind of thing. I got interested in art and art history--took a whole lot of courses, getting A's in those and C's in math. Comes my senior year you know, fish or cut bait. What are you going to do, kid? At that point my parents say, "If you want to go to graduate school in art, we have had it. What the hell do you want to be an art historian for? There is no money in that." So I said, "Okay, math is all right, I don't mind it all that much. It is not all that hard."

So I went to graduate school and worked pretty hard and got pretty interested in it. My first two years I passed the master's exam which was the written exam. I passed the qualifying Ph.D. exam which was an oral exam. And then for the next three years I did absolutely nothing. I am just stalling and switching advisors and changing topics and having personal problems and really not getting all that done. So at that point they said, "You have been here for five years. We will give you one more year to get out of here." So that sixth year I wrote my thesis and got out of there.

I wanted the degree, I wanted the damn Ph.D., I mean I was very impressed with people who had their Ph.D. At that point I decided that I wanted to teach and I am not going to get a job teaching unless I have a Ph.D. Somebody who had a Ph.D. for some reason I respected them, for all the work they did, for probably how intelligent they were, at least for what their perseverance had been. I mean when I finished you know, one of my relatives said, "You got a doctorate--that is our family's first." I have a cousin who is a doctor, my father is a lawyer, but the family never had a Ph.D. I have wanted to achieve this goal for a very long time.

My work here is vastly different today than it was three years ago, which was vastly different than it was six years ago. I come here most recently with probably less idealism and less patience than three years ago and certainly less than six years ago. Part of it has to do with the fact that I have been doing the same things for seven years. I like the students, I think, more than I did before. I get along with them really well, most of them anyway. The students are a lot better than when I first started here, so it is a more interesting job teaching. A lot of what I feel about working here is just plain frustration. It is sort of a personal frustration and it is sort of an institutional frustration. The personal frustration I think is just because I have been doing the same damn thing for so long and the institutional frustration arises from the fact that none of us here had any idea that any of this was going to be going on. The school has been in a sense living on borrowed time every since it opened. All kinds of major decisions regarding the school have been postponed. I can look back at the last six or seven years and say, "We have done a good job," at the same time really having grave feelings about the future.

At the beginning it was a case of idealism: Let us get this place off the ground, let us work like hell. Let us do everything that we can to keep it going. A lot of that enthusiasn has faded, at least in my case. I mean, I do my job here mainly in a teaching capacity. Quite frankly the only joy I derive from this job, at this point, is walking into a classroom and talking to students or seeing students in my office and explaining the subject material. What is still really good for me is teaching, talking to students. I mean in some sense it is a power role for sure. In other senses it is a teaching role, a showing role and explaining role, which I enjoy. My classes are pretty loose. I let the students call me whatever they want to call me.

Everytime I go into the course I know exactly what I am going to say. I know the examples I am going to use and probably over the years my teaching has gotten better and better. I think that if I started to actually dislike the classroom process I would leave, almost immediately. Everybody is allowed to miss one test or to drop the lowest one. Homework is generally sort of an optional situation. I just explain in the beginning that probably half of the exam is going to be taken from homework and if they want to do well on the exam they had better do the homework.

Most of the kinds of things I teach except for the statistics course are really sort of mechanical manipulative type of skills. I suspect that the majority of what we do is teach people technical skills at this point, how to manipulate an equation, how to solve an equation that is already there, how to draw a graph, how to remove a parenthesis, how to take a derivative. Something like that in preparation, not to be a mathematician, but in preparation to look at a formula in an economics book and be able to look at a graph and be able to read it. Quite frankly, when you have college quote freshmen unquote who come in absolutely unable to do the basic arithmetic computation, let alone algebraic computation, and who want in the space of two or maybe three years to get out of here with an Associate Degree, able to transfer to a four-year school, we do not have the luxury to sit around and talk abut examples. We have only time to give an incredible crash course in twelve years of public education. So what we have to do is take things that normally people have an incredible amount of time to do and just cut them down to the absolute bare bones.

I encourage a lot of class discussion. I give them a problem to do and I say, "Talk to your neighbor about how to do the problem. If you don't know how to do it, ask questions. Let's just not get all heavy about what we are doing here." Let's face it,how many times have these students been told how to multiply fractions? And they still don't know. How many times have they been taught how to deal with a percent? And they still don't know. Obviously there has to be some sort of different approach to this kind of education, this time around. Because if this is the tenth time you are going to learn it, this is the place for the last resort. If you don't learn it here there is no other place that is going to deal with you. Let's face it, you have already been through high school. You have already been through all kinds of community tutoring programs. You have already tried it at the state college and it didn't work out. Well let's do something different. Let us help each other. I am not just your teacher. I am somebody who is really trying to help you learn this. And if there are thirty people in this class and I give thirty A's I am absolutely delighted. I am not somebody who is out to screw students. I am somebody out to show them how to do something. It is only part of my job that I have to give you exams and I have to give you grades.

So I think I try to make it very clear from the beginning that we are all going to work together, that we are not going to have this gigantic division --teacher versus student. It is going to be teacher and students. I have developed an intuition about students. I have developed an intuition about what that look on somebody's face in the middle of a sentence looks like and can stop and start the sentence again, in a different way. I have developed an intuition where problems are going to arise and therefore spend two weeks on that instead of two days. I am just a lot more sensitive to intellectual problems, academic problems, personal problems, ego problems, health problems, but can also put them into better perspective. You know, is this something that I should be sympathetic toward? Whenever you are dealing with a student in trouble, what you are going to do is always sort of a judgment call. I think that what has evolved is that the judgment has gotten better, the sensitivity has gotten more precise, and the intuition has just sort of started and been developed.

The first time I taught a course--I mean I never had an education course in my life. I didn't know what to do. I showed up September first. They said, "Hi, and September 2 you are going to walk in and you are going to run a recitation for Calculus I, and you are going to run six hours of this a week. This is the book and these are the problems that you are supposed to do. See you when it comes time to hand in the final grades."

When I first came here I was sort of aware that I was this color and they were that color. Coming out of all of the upheavals and guilt of the sixties, you know, I have all of the standard white liberal bull. I am doing the good work and these are people, you know--really sort of a racist attitude. Over the years, I mean it sounds like a cliche, but I really didn't notice which ones are white and which ones are Black and which ones are Spanish. Certainly I have been up against all kinds of cultural disparities, in terms of it took me a while to realize that half of the women here have kids, and what that meant in terms of performing well academically. It took me a while to be able to sort of understand that a lot of the men are working at one or sometimes at one and a half or two jobs, and what that meant in terms of classroom attention, in showing up, in terms of being able to do any studying.

At the university where I was a T.A. what interfered with academic processes were: I couldn't come to class because I was up taking drugs all last night and just couldn't get up for it; I couldn't come because we drove to New York and stayed out. This kind of thing was interfering with academic processes. Here you know, couldn't come to school, my husband died. Couldn't come to school, my baby is in the hospital. Couldn't come to school, they wouldn't let me off work. I couldn't come to school, I was in the hospital with a heart infection. We are talking about just horrible things. It was a horrible shock for me as much as we all ranted and raved, you know, in 1963, 1967, 1969 and so on, about we have got a whole lot of people in this country who are in an awful lot of trouble. It is a whole lot different when you are going to college and your parents are sending you there. That is a whole lot different than "I couldn't come to school yesterday , my baby died, the ambulance wouldn't come, my house burned down, the firemen wouldn't come." So that was a shock. Something of that magnitude is not constant but the kinds of things that happen in this community are just incredible and the kind of suffering really that a lot of people have to put up with is just overwhelming. I am not quite as shocked about it anymore and when somebody says so and so happened, I say, "Okay, are you okay now? And can I catch you up? Do you want me to send you to the tutoring center?" You don't have to go beyond the fact that something horrible happened and deal with it on an academic level: "Do you want to drop the course? Do you want to take a week off? What can I do?"

One talks about going to class and you are going to do this and that and people finally learn something, but there is always sort of nagging in the back of your mind that this person is going to get out of here and what in the hell are they going to do. You know, some of our students do very well, some of my former students are making more money than I am, and they are doing all right. For a lot of them, though, you know they are going to struggle through here, and they are going to spend three years and they are not going anywhere, they are just not going anywhere.

I find it interesting because I find the people I teach interesting. If we are talking about an intellectual challenge, forget it. It is not here. We are talking about a teaching-method challenge, an approach challenge, personality challenge, a patience challenge, an ingenuity challenge. In terms of being intellectually stimulated, in terms of in seven years everybody asks the question I didn't know the answer to, no. In terms of learning anything new about my field, no. In terms of ever having a challenging conversation about any of the things that have gone on, no. I mean let's face it, I did an awful lot of mathematics at some point and I knew an awful lot of mathematics. I probably have forgotten ninety percent of it. I was moving a year ago and came across my thesis and I couldn't read it. You know, I don't get out of sophomore mathematics here.

The fact is that this job is in a certain sense limiting. At this point I am looking at something else. If I had been in a four-year school it is a possibility that I could have continued in my research and I could have been teaching more challenging courses. The challenge here is of a different nature. I could now be a very happy associate professor with tenure at Amherst, Dartmouth, those schools. It is really hard to tell. I sort of came out of graduate school knowing that I wanted to teach. It just turns out when I got the job here it was the job that sort of turned me into, you know, one hundred percent teacher. You can do research if you want to but we don't give a damn. If I had gone someplace else it would have been a different thrust. I also might not have liked it. I might have said, "I don't want to do this research thing. I just want to teach." Or I could have gotten to it and done a whole lot of research and for all I know I could have been sick of that and be at exactly the same place.

You know I am not preparing anybody to go to graduate school. I am not for the most part dealing with people who are going to be scientists or mathematicians, engineers. Who am I dealing with? I am dealing with a whole lot of people who have got to take six credits a semester or they are not going to get out of here. I am dealing with a whole lot of people who want to be history majors, sociology majors, psychology majors, and the program says they have got to take some statistics. I am dealing with a whole lot of people who want to go into business, who want to go into economics, who want to go into accounting, management, and the business department says, "Look , you have got to get all of this algebra and you have got to take calculus." What I talk about is not an end in itself. They sort of have to pass by my classroom to get someplace else.

Commentary

Jesus Lopez's life history is in many ways a story of liberal progressivism at work. At an early age he recognized the possibilities that education held for him as he saw the fate of his cousins who had dropped out of school. His geographical proximity to and then friendship with Japanese Americans gave him a sense of the possibility that education held. Despite obstacles in his path, he preserved his sense of what he wanted and where he was going. With his own independent sense of matters and the encouragement of teachers, he committed himself to the field of chemistry and the pursuit of a Ph.D.

The carefully planned course to that goal was shaken a little when his thoughts of attending universities in the East and Midwest were stymied by the fact that even if he got scholarship aid, he could not afford to travel and live so far from home. Despite all the encouragement to think of places like Harvard and Purdue, he went to the state college in his home town, because that was what he could afford. But even that was really not too bad, since he realized that he had smaller classes than his friends who were going to California universities, and that, combined with his teaching assistantship, meant to him that he was getting a solid education.

But then the path to his Ph.D. was interrupted by the Vietnam war and his being drafted. Although the account he gave us in the interview was not full or explicit, it was clear that the army was a confrontation with absurdity. He did say in his interview that he "...spent the first three months in the army in total active misery because I resented the fact that I was there, and I resented pretty much everything about the army--its mentality." He resented not being able to think and make decisions for himself. Luckily for him he learned how to survive and fight the army without going under. But the army and the Vietnam experience cost him more than two years.

When he came out of the army and went back to graduate school, he found that he did not enjoy the research as much as he enjoyed teaching. He became enmeshed in a type of analysis about teaching and research that undermined his commitment to the Ph.D., that led him to separate teaching from research, and led him to miscalculate, perhaps, the work of chemistry Ph.D.'s in four-year colleges and universities. He wanted to do research because he was interested in the field and he wanted his work to flow out of those interests. Apparently none of the people with whom he spoke (or if they did he chose not to hear) told him that in a university or college setting one can have reasonable freedom and still get paid to pursue research. Nor did he understand, because of the stage at which he was in his career, the potential intimate relationship between teaching and research. To a graduate assistant teaching sections of introductory courses and doing research for a degree, teaching and research may well have seemed separable, and the teaching more enjoyable. It is only later in an academic career that security of position, interests, and experience, start to become integrated so that research and teaching are complementary aspects of intellectual interests and activity.

As his thoughts changed about research, he let the goal of a Ph.D. slip away, and he decided to teach in a community college because he enjoyed teaching and because in a community college, unlike in a high school, he would be working with students who would want to be there.

Perhaps it is too much to speculate that the absurdities of the army and the war affected Lopez's commitment to the notions of progress implicit in research in science, and that his commitment to teaching in a community college was at least partly a result of that confrontation with absurdity and a concomitant undermining of his desire to go to the pinnacle in his field. But his interview reveals that after he came out of the army, he persuaded himself that he was not interested in research if it had to be done under the constraints he perceived to prevail in industry and universities; that he could separate teaching from research; that he could afford to "let a little of his ego" slip away from him and teach in a community college. He told no story of any mentor in his graduate program trying to persuade him to do otherwise.

Once in the community college, Lopez began to experience the consequences of adopting for himself the community college model of separating research from teaching and the lower division courses in college from the upper division. Because the community colleges have stressed that they are teaching institutions primarily, their faculty are not encouraged to do research which would distract them from their teaching responsibilities. The pressure of the institution is for faculty to make themselves available to students, to see that their primary work outside of the classroom is to work with students individually in a way that blurs the line between academic and personal matters. The model gets some of its energy from a certain pride in asserting that community college faculty get closer to their students, know them better, are more accessible than their counterparts in four-year colleges and universities. The model feeds off an extreme image of a professor in a university engrossed totally in his or her research and totally uninterested and inaccessible to his or her students.

There is a pressure that builds in community colleges within this model. Success is measured in how available you make yourself, in how accessible you are at any time of the day, and in how many students come to see you. One faculty member, for example, makes a point of commenting on how busy she was seeing students in her office. With the rise of unionization, office hours have been written into the contract and accessibility has become more routinized, but as another faculty member says in a profile presented later in this report, the ethos of the institution works to make a faculty member feel guilty if he or she goes off to a corner of the library to read.

The model is further reinforced by a notion held by some community college faculty that their students are different from students in four-year institutions, that their past histories and present lives are more complex and that they need the close personal relationships that are offered to them by community college faculty. There is something patronizing and controlling embedded in this notion. Implicit within it is the idea that because people are poorer, or of a different race, or have had less previous academic success, or are rebounding off a divorce, that their individual psychologies are more complex and more needy than students who are richer, have experienced some previous academic success, are partners whose marriages have not broken apart. While lack of money, marital status, race certainly are crucial factors in people's experience, they are basically social forces interacting with psychological ones which are well outside the control of individual community college faculty. In the end, it is difficult to assert that the psychological state of a student in a four-year college is any less complex than that of a student in the community college. Some faculty in the study recognize the complexity involved in this issue and have taken steps to limit their responsiveness to a neediness on the part of students to which they have little chance of responding effectively, and to a neediness on their own part to "help"rather than teach their students.

A view of the relationship that has been promoted in community colleges between faculty and students is that of the faculty member doing good, helping the students through various personal crises as they contend with school. Lopez's story reflects the consequences of working within this model. The new and modern community college building in which he works is designed to reinforce this model. His faculty office wall to the hallway is made of glass. The faculty member in his or her office is always visible. There is no way of shutting the door and having some privacy to do work without a student being able to walk up, see that you are in, and interrupt. The result is the near consumption of the faculty member. When he is in the building, he is either teaching, at committee meetings, or talking with students. They attach themselves to him in his office, in the hall, and when he is having a cup of coffee in the cafeteria. Lopez and other community college faculty with whom we have talked paint a picture of a day that is frenetically paced, almost totally public, and consuming.

At the same time that he participates in the community college ethos, his sense of identity with and responsibility to his field and its standards provide an imperative for him to teach his introductory chemistry course in the way that it would be taught if he were teaching in a four-year school. The result is that students complain about the amount of work that he requires and they undermine his sense of himself as a chemistry professor by saying that if they had wanted to do that much work they would have gone to a four-year college in the first place. This offends Lopez's sense of who he is and what he is about. He had to struggle to not let these confrontations with students about the nature of work in the field and the potential benefits if they stick to it threaten his sense of self-worth. He talks to students about the worth of "suffering" through his courses in order to obtain some worthwhile long-range goal. It took him a while, he said, to learn not to take the incidence of dropouts from his classes personally. But it is difficult not to take a student's dropping your class personally when the ethos of the community college is for faculty to take their students very personally.

In dealing with this contradiction, Lopez has to face the fact that he is working with some students whose problem is not that they cannot understand chemistry; it is that they cannot read well enough to be able to study the text the way a text must be studied. They are high school graduates but somehow the schools have not prepared them to read well enough to be able to study his subject.

In addition to all the pressures he faces as a science teacher, he also has extra demands placed upon him as a Mexican American. He feels an obligation to the Mexican American students at his college and works as the advisor of their club, until he realizes that he has become burned out in that capacity and someone else needs to take on that responsibility. He is concerned that not very many minority students come into the sciences and he searches for ways to contend with that fact.

In the face of those powerful forces over which he really has little possibility of control, Lopez moves forward. Despite the frenetic pace, he still enjoys coming to work everyday. At a certain point in his own education he connected to the difference among rote learning, internalizing principles, and thinking conceptually. He turns his intellectual interest, as did Nancy Warren, to how that process takes place in people and how he can make it happen with his students.

Lopez accepted the rationale for the existence of the community college. He separated the notion of teaching from that of research and believed that it was possible to teach well in a structure that separated the first two years of college from the last two. His interview reflects an enormous amount of energy being poured into his work as he lives out the consequences of that model. And in the end, despite the fact that he says he is growing in his field and loves his work, there is a sense that the work is so consuming that he is beginning to wonder whether he is being compensated enough for the work he does. It is not a matter of absolute salary. Rather,can society compensate a community college teacher sufficiently for working and teaching in an institution that faces him with so many contradictions, contradictions which must be especially difficult for a scientist? One of the things that seems to be happening to Lopez is that while he says he is growing in his field, his field is changing from chemistry to education in a way that risks both. If he loses chemistry and becomes deeply engrossed in problems of learning, he will have to come to grips with the social forces affecting his students with which no learning theory has yet been developed to contend.

Unlike Lopez, James Mowry went on for his Ph.D. James Mowry had a year in industry after his bachelor's degree in chemistry and he knew what it was like to be near the bottom of the hierarchy in the laboratory in which he worked. He went to graduate school first intending to get a master's degree and then changed his goals to a Ph.D. When he received his degree he thought he would eventually go into industry, but he was interested in trying teaching first. When he came to make that basic decision about whether to teach in a four-year college or community college he chose the community college for two reasons: he did not want to get into a publish-or-perish situation that he thought existed in four-year colleges and universities and he wanted to be his own boss. He did not want people telling him what to do. His experience as a graduate student in chemistry in a good-sized public university in the East gave him his picture of academic life. That picture was remarkably monochromatic. He thought all four-year institutions operated on a strict publish-or-perish model: junior professors newly degreed did what they were told to do. He chose to be a "big fish in a little pond" instead.

The irony of Mowry's experience is that he writes prolifically. Through his outside consulting work with disposable waste problems he has maintained a deep commitment and developing sense of expertise and leadership in his field. He receives awards from professional associations in chemistry that normally go to professors in four-year institutions. He has achieved a sense of autonomy and respect in the community college. Within the structure of his college he is a division chairperson, the third highest paid person in the college, and recognized and respected in his community.

His profile reflects a deep consideration and involvement with students in the community college. He is willing to reach out on a personal level to encourage and do everything in his power to make the college a college of opportunity for students from working-class backgrounds who have untapped talent. He is a representative of an institution that offers opportunity for progress on a personal level and he reaches out to potential students with an almost missionary sense of commitment.

The issue that emerges from Mowry's profile is that the more deeply he gets into research and consulting in his field, the more closely connected he becomes with chemistry, the less connected he is to what he thinks his students need. If he were in a college or university doing the type of work he is doing on the edge of a crucial field, his research, consulting, and work with his students through teaching and advising would come together. But in the community college setting his students are limited basically to introductory work in the field. And he works in a structure that separates teaching from research. While his work seems to add to the image of his community college, it detracts from his availability to students. He is less patient with them and demands more of them while not having the time to spend with individual help that he was willing to give in earlier years. While he is able to bring what he learns from his instruction into his teaching, there seems little way, given the structure of the communiy college, to draw his students into his consulting work more directly. There does not seem to be a satisfactory way in his situation to integrate his growing leadership in an applied aspect of the field of chemistry and his work in the community college. While he thrives on the sense of autonomy and power he has developed in the community college, he is starting to lead two separate lives: one as a community college teacher and one as a consultant in his field, and they are starting to pull at each other more and more.

Both Lopez's and Mowry's experience reflect the complexity of consequences that stems from the community college separating research from teaching and the first two years of college from the second two. Those disjunctions, as we have seen, affected to a degree the work of humanities teachers in the community college; but in the sciences those disjunctions seem to contradict the basic assumptions of the field. Science without research is not science. Science that does not reflect the cumulative and progressive integration of knowledge in the field seems to violate the nature of the field. While there may be introductions to a field, there can not be a thinner version of science for community college students. Either one is involved in what scientists do, or students are learning about science but not learning to do science. The first two years of study in a field remain unconnected to the rest of the field: unless there is an assumption that the student will go on in the field. While chemical engineering is the business and applied aspect of the field of chemistry, there is no course that we know of that is labelled business chemistry. The community college structure is in tension with the basic progressive energy of the physical sciences. If faculty accept the structure of the community college as Lopez did, and adapt their work to it, they progressively lose their footing in the field; if they adopt a position of autonomy within the community college and construct the work as a commitment to the field, they begin to lose their footing in the community college. Because of its structure the integration of deepening work in the field of knowledge and deepening work in the community college seems difficult.

Eugene Bowen seems to contend successfully with that issue. Eugene Bowen's "happy life" is his life as a teacher. He enjoys success as a teacher of mathematics.He knows how to do his job well. He can take a community college student who has missed several weeks of classes and knows how to bring that student up to date. He knows how to sense where his students are and is confident enough in himself to adjust whatever he is planning to teach to what his students are and are not grasping. Some of the English teachers whom we interviewed feel overwhelmed by the impossibility of teaching writing to students who have had little previous success in that area . Unlike them, Bowen feels confident in his ability to take a class, some of whom have failed algebra in high school, some of whom have never had algebra, and some of whom are quite comfortable with the subject, and work with them through the material of the course. He has no doubts about the importance of his subject matter and his ability to teach it.

As a veteran at the college he has seen it change, from a smaller, more simply organized school where the faculty did everything, to a larger, more bureaucratized school where administrators have taken over jobs that the faculty used to do; the faculty's sense of involvement with the entire educational process seems diminished. Despite the increase in levels of administration, he is one of the faculty in the school who, when necessary, can walk into the president's office, cut through the red tape, and get something done. He has a sense of his power in the institution that comes from his years of experience and his sense of rightness about the subject matter he teaches. He is doing good work by teaching mathematics in a community college. His experience teaching at West Point convinced him that anybody could teach math to the "bright" students there. He believes in the "challenge" of teaching students who need him more than the cadets at the military academy.

When he first looked for positions after West Point, he considered four-year colleges but was put off by their focus on research interests rather than on his interest in teaching. He,like Lopez, was more than ready to separate the notion of teaching from research.In carrying out the challenge of teaching mathematics in a community college, he is sometimes hurt by his attempts to reach out and make himself available to students who take their appointments with him less seriously than he does. But while that does provide some complexity to his view of teaching, on the whole he is happiest in the classroom. The real complexity with which Bowen has to contend is two-pronged. First he has to decide whether he will seek more money for his family by pursuing a position in administration. He has been a department chairman, gained administrative experience, and does not like it. But he is frustrated because it appears that administration is the one path available to rise in the community college structure and make more money for his family. There does not appear to be significant opportunity within the structure of being a community college professor of math to look forward to significant amounts of money or power. He must look to administration which would take him away from what he does best if he wants to think of rising in the system.

Related to the dilemma of how to protect his enjoyment of teaching and yet make more money is the gnawing feeling that seems to be almost always there at some latent level that teaching in a community college is really not respected by his neighbors, friends, and former colleagues. He has to live with the fact that he is perceived by others as teaching in an institution which is near the bottom of the hierarchy in higher education. He tells of moving from a working-class neighborhood where he had the respect of the painters and other work people who were his neighbors to a middle-class neighborhood where his professional neighbors' casual conversation gave "subtle hints" that they were inclined to disparage the community college as an educational institution.

The field of mathematics is conventionally perceived as one of the high-status academic fields, one of the most intellectually demanding, and high in the hierarchy of academic subjects. To feel that a position as a math teacher is less than a first rate position, not socially important and intellectually respected, is inconsistent with the tradition of the field of mathematics and a source of disquiet to Bowen. The low status of community colleges in the hierarchy of higher education provides a field force that is sufficiently strong to make a community college teacher in one of the most respected and solid academic areas wonder about his worth. The psychological question of worth interacts with the financial reality to provide a serious tension for Bowen in his world of community college teaching. Faced with that tension he contends with basic questions of what is of worth: would he be a better person if he taught in a four-year college or had a high administrative position that carried with it more money?

The problem is that those may be the wrong questions. Eugene Bowen's profile throws into relief aspects of the structure within which he works. He does not face the difficult issue of how an educational institution that wants to see itself as part of higher education can disavow the pursuit of new knowledge as an integral part of its mission and still maintain a status comparable to institutions that do not disavow that mission. Educational institutions cannot base their claim to being of worth on materialistic criteria of productivity. Moreover, since they are schools and not social welfare agencies, the claim to worth based on social welfare notions of doing good will always be ambiguous at best and suspect at worst. Colleges must base their claim to worth on intellectual criteria. And yet, in their separation of teaching and research, community colleges have taken and have been encouraged to take an essentially anti-intellectual stand.

Instead of looking at the relationship of these complex structural questions, Bowen looks to his own individual moral worth as what is at stake rather than the structure of the system in which he works. That substituting of individual responsibility for social and structural forces is a repeated theme in the experience of those who study and work in community colleges. It is an essentially conservative response to a situation, allowing the status quo of the structure to remain the same while seeking individual resolutions of the tensions that result. For a person involved in the field of mathematics, an essentially radical field of inquiry, there must be a tension between maintaining identity with the field and teaching mathematics in the community college.

Shelley Weiss's profile reflects that tension and more. Her profile raises the larger question of women in mathematics. An extremely bright, talented young woman, she made the unconventional choice of pursuing a career in mathematics rather than in journalism and literature. She made a practical decision to pursue mathematics because she realized that it would make her employable anywhere in the world. She went to graduate school in mathematics and faced the fact that male professors pick proteges for whom to be mentors, and those proteges are not likely to be female graduate students if males are available. Furthermore, there were very few female tenured professors to provide a model for women graduate students. In the process of deciding to leave graduate school after obtaining her master's in mathematics, no single professor or fellow graduate student urged her to reconsider and stick to her goal of getting a Ph.D.

After a number of years of experience in the computer industry, an industry to which so many are encouraged to point as a guarantee of their earning a livelihood, she tired of both the boorishness of many of the people with whom she worked and the inelegance of computer programming when compared to the elegance of conceptualization in mathematics. She decided to return to teaching, first through a program of teaching math to elementary school children with computer assisted instruction, and then in the community college.

In the community college she was faced with the fact that, as one of the youngest on the campus, she was treated patronizingly by colleagues. In her concern to establish herself in the college she acted out her part quite consistent with their view. The first four or five yers she was at the school she thought were wonderful. The college was like a family to her. But her father's death was the occasion of some serious rethinking and she decided to stop playing the "good little girl" role. Her decision brought her into conflict with other members of her department, and when she ran for chairperson of her department, she split the department down the middle in a divisive political squabble.

She had found satisfaction working in the college's women's re-entry program. Before the term "math anxiety" had become fashionable she was working with women returning to school on overcoming their fears and inhibitions about math. But despite the real satisfaction she got in teaching in this program, she tired of having to fight men on the faculty who resisted the notion of a special center for women who were re-entering college.

She found herself caught between valuing the security that her job as a community college teacher of mathematics offered her, and a shaky commitment to the field, complicated by a structure in the community college that did not support further development in the field for her. She began to resist playing the role in her department of one willing to give extra time to program and materials development without compensation, and yet she realized that the community college is not structured to encourage obtaining grants and released time for such work. She finds herself up in the air at this point. She is not willing to play the nice little cooperative girl in the department. She works in a structure which, in stressing so much a notion of work that is defined as totally in the classroom or in the office with students, gives little support to activities that would enhance the core aspect of her work. She appreciates the intellectual elegance of mathematics,but through a combination of social and personal circumstances has cut herself off from a sense of being intellectually requited in her field. She approaches her upcoming sabbatical with a real sense of confusion and not knowing what to do. Her work in the community college is contributing to pulling her apart rather than integrating her interests and efforts. She is considering new career possibilities but is not yet ready to give up the security of salary which teaching in the community college offers her. Instead of her identity with mathematics empowering her, as she hoped her unconventional decision to enter the field would do, the sexism she has faced in the field and in her work has served to block a sense of power.

Unlike Eugene Bowen and Shelley Weiss, Murray Green earned his Ph.D. in mathematics. He saw the Ph.D. as being at the pinnacle of his field and he wanted it and got it. When he received it he came out into an academic marketplace that was beginning to tighten up in the early seventies. He was not a star student of a star professor in an elite private university, so he had difficulty getting a job in a four-year college. His first offer was in a community college established to serve minority students in a large city.

He spent seven years contributing to that college's getting off the ground. He fought program battles, committee battles, and political battles trying to develop a stable math department and a stable college. But the college always seemed to be under threat from some external agent, and no matter how hard the faculty worked, no sense of security about the future of the college developed. That insecurity was, for Green, complicated by the additional complexity of being a white faculty member in a college that served an essentially minority student body. While he grew increasingly more comfortable with his students over the years, and while he was to become somewhat inured to the incredible conditions of poverty and racism with which his students had to contend while at the same time being students, there still remained a basic separation between his world and that of his students.

He provides a graphic account of trying to cram twelve years of basic mathematical skills into a few years of community college mathematics. He has become excellent at working with his students to overcome all that they have not had in the past. But he finally feels two senses of loss in all his efforts. He knows that while a few of his students have made it and are making more money than he, a lot of his students are fighting incredible odds and "are not going anywhere." Try as he and the rest of the community college faculty might, his students are not going to overcome the handicaps imposed upon them by racism and poverty through their efforts in the community college. It is too little too late for most of them.

The second sense of loss is that of his own sense of intellectual accomplishment and interest. He is tired of the institutional battles which have occupied most of his energies in his experience at the college, and he realizes that he has forgotten most of the math he knew when he got his doctorate. He recently looked at his own dissertation and could not understand much of it. While the pedagogical problems he faces command a great deal of energy, they can not take the place of the intellectual satisfaction of working deeply in his field. He cannot teach anything beyond sophomore mathematics. He is not encouraged to do research. He is fed up with the political battles for existence that the institution as a college serving a predominantly minority student body faces. He is limited in how much recognition he can expect from the administration of the college, given the complexity of racial politics involved in white professors teaching in predominantly minority institutions with a strong press for minority leadership. As he says in the vignette we have presented, he is starting to look to something else--which in fact turned out to be medical school.

It has been argued by Alfred Sohn-Rethel that the most crucial dividing line between intellectual and manual labor is controlled by the field of mathematics (Sohn-Rethel 1978, pp.101-103). He asserts that even if a society were to eliminate private property, as long as the separation of manual and intellectual labor existed there would be an inequitable social class system.

Mathematics is the key to the natural sciences. The dividing line between being a technician, an engineer, and a scientist is often the amount of mathematics that a person has had and comprehends. It is clear that there is a connection between science and mathematics and power and opportunity in this country. That women and minorities are known to be less represented in these fields than their numbers in the general population would justify is one more concrete reflection of the operation of racism and sexism in our society. The fact that community colleges are increasingly turning their attention to what they call career education programs, and away from programs leading to transfer to four-year institutions, means that students in the community colleges will take less mathematics and thereby be limited to low-level positions in technologically oriented fields. Without sufficient mathematics they cannot go into depth in science and engineering and thus remain consigned to the bottom of the hierarchy in technological careers.

For faculty who teach in the areas of math and science, if they maintain a sense of identity with their fields, this must be a constant source of tension, since the tradition of thought in math and science is essentially progressive. Despite the rhetoric of opportunity in community colleges, the actuality of the structure of math and science teaching is limiting for both the students and the faculty . If they become more interested in the pedagogical issues, as Bowen and Lopez did, they must contend individually with issues that are much more powerful and pervasive than any individual can contend with as a teacher. While teachers of math and science exude a confidence about their teaching consistent with the logically organized cumulative nature of their fields, they face forces in the community college structure that undermine their individual efforts and skill, complicate their identity with their field, and provide tensions that threaten their work as teachers.

Chapter Six

The Idea of Progress and The Community College: The Work of Social Science Faculty

Introduction to the Profiles

In concluding this section of the report we present the profiles of four faculty who teach social sciences in community colleges. The experience presented and the issues raised in these four profiles are an appropriate capstone to the presentations of the work of community college faculty who teach in the traditional liberal arts areas. The social sciences originated as an attempt to merge the objects of attention of the humanities with the methodology of the sciences. In teaching in an area which attempts such a merger, social science faculty present a telling picture of what it is like to teach in a community college.

The picture is sharply delineated because of the nature of the interaction of social sciences as a field of inquiry and the nature of community colleges as institutions. The development of sociology, the central discipline in the social sciences, was closely tied to the notion of social progress. The chief interest of early sociological writers lay in the discovery of the nature of progress and the means of its realization (Becker and Barnes 1961, p.501).

While social scientists have certainly come to recognize that the notion of social progress is problematic, and have substituted the notion of social change for that of social progress (Becker and Barnes 1961, p. 504), the notion that the pursuit of inquiry and understanding in the social sciences can lead to a better world is still strong. The profiles of faculty in the social sciences illuminate the tensions that exist between the interests and commitments underlying their fields of inquiry and the reality of their work .

Profile

SAMUEL BERGER

(Samuel Berger is in his sixties and taught in metropolitan community colleges in Illinois. He was interviewed in his home during the winter of 1980.)

On December 15, 1920, my mother and father and my two older brothers, then six and one, were on a ship and I was inside my mother and it was just approaching New York City and my mother's time had come to give birth to me. So a little boat came along and brought them to shore and brought my mother to the hospital and that night I was born. So I was the first Yankee in the family. My father had never gone to school in the old country. He had learned some ritual prayers and the Hebrew script. My mother didn't even do that, as was the practice, but she too had learned the ritual somehow.

We settled in New York City on the lower east side, naturally. My father was a carpenter. He had finished his apprenticeship when he was twelve. He got a job very quickly. Most of the relatives were in Chicago. So after about a year and half we moved to Chicago and I lived there from 1922 to 1978. I got all my schooling there. We lived in a Jewish neighborhood where there were Poles; I think the Poles probably called it a Polish neighborhood. It was a Jewish-Polish neighborhood and neither group had anything to do with the other. We all went to the same public schools. I don't remember ever having a Polish friend. Family by family, clan by clan, we used to see each other every weekend. There was an organization of all the people from a certain town back in Europe. Almost every week we would be visiting each other, very close knit. We were probably the poorest of the relatives. Some of them were tailors, so called, some became furriers, and a couple of them owned their own shops.

I was six and a half when I got sick. It was 1927. I remember that just a few months before I was running around hollering, "Lindy, Lindy, had gone over the ocean." I was in two hospitals for at least a year. August was the time of terror. A lot of kids died. Across the street a little girl died. So the fact that I still lived, you know, was a great thing. We all got special physical treatment. Even when I was home from the hospital a visiting nurse used to come in and rub my legs with some kind of soap. You recall Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia, and so on. It was the same thing. It took a great deal for me to finally allow myself to go in the water. Nobody in my family swam and I didn't know anybody who swam.

When I returned, I returned to a school for crippled children run by the school system. It was one of the best schools I have ever gone to. Not only was it physically set up well but psychologically it was well thought out. Everybody there was in different stages of self-care. Both my arms and legs had been paralyzed--I had an excellent recovery except for a limp in one leg. Everybody who was able to was given somebody else to help. I escorted a blind girl from class to class which made me feel like an utter big shot. It was also the first school where I met a Black kid. He also had polio. It was sort of disturbing to see some of the kids that were badly off. I don't mean polio, polio was one of the most ordinary things.I never have forgotten it; even later on when I got much older and I got active in teacher politics, I always searched out teachers who were teching at that school and asked them, "How are things? Are they as good as they used to be?" When I was sent home I had braces on both legs.

I had crutches by around eleven or so. At that time we moved to another neighborhood. I was a husky kid and I would want to play ball. So they would allow someone to run for me and I would bat and then usually get a hit and somebody else would run. In football I would be a tackle so I wouldn't have to run. But I was always aware of it, no question about it. When I was a kid it was always on my mind. And later you worried about girls and all that stuff in high school, but that turned out to not be a problem in itself.

My father was a very simple man and never had any education. His view toward my further education was that I should do something where I could sit down. There were sort of two divisions of mankind--those who worked sitting down and those who worked walking and climbing as he did. That is the only kind of discussion we ever had on what I ought to do. One of my relatives used to go to the opera and I used to talk to that person sometimes. He himself wasn't educated but had educated himself. Of course nobody ever mentioned teaching to me. Nobody in my neighborhood, nobody in my clan, had ever gone to college. The only time I ever heard of college was when my brother and I used to go every Saturday to the movies and we would see the college games. The guys would wear coon coats, and that was college. But it had no reality about ourselves, that we should ever go to a college. And nobody raised the question.

What happened, my family borrowed a little dough and they bought a little candy store sort of, in another neighborhood with some Jews but that was basically Irish and Italian. My father called the Irish "bums." He thought every Irishman was a bum. I remember a kid, Herman, a German kid in '33 or '34, we were sitting on the corner and I was sitting on top of the mailbox. Herman said that his parents had received a letter from the old country meaning Germany. He turned to me and he said, "You know, people like you are getting killed there." I said, "Go on." And I said, "Why are they killing them?" "Because they are Jews." I said, "No one would do that, how could they do that?" He said, well he really didn't know,he just read the letter and that is that.

My father never read a book to me. He spoke in Yiddish and so I learned Yiddish that way. He would tell me stories about whatever I asked. I would often ask about how his master cheated him when he finished his apprenticeship. I never saw any books at home. Now from the library, well, my brother and I used to read magazines, go to the drugstore and buy Doc Savage and some of the Spicy Horror and God knows whatever we could dare afford. And the Tom Swift books,that sort of thing.

When I was a student at the high school, now this is from 1934 to 1938, it was one of the alivest places on earth. We had every conceivable political trend of thought. And I was very very pushed by them. There was an intellectual atmosphere. I got a political education there which was incomparable no matter what curriculum I was in. I remember the valedictorian--he was a Trotskyite. He gave a speech on "Stop the Imperialist War" in 1938 before the war began. He knew it was coming. It was a normal thing; nobody thought they would stop such a speech.

The second year of high school I took a course in ancient history. The teacher talked to me after awhile and asked me had I thought much about going to college. I said I had never thought of it, and he said you really ought to go to college and that was the end of that. That was the second year but I continued in my business curriculum. I was a very good student. I probably said to myself, "I will be a really good businessman." Then at the end of the third year I met a guy in the Glee Club who was just the opposite of me, a Jewish boy, more of an upper class background, who of course was going to college. His parents would kill him if he didn't go to college because all his older brothers went to college and even one of his parents went to college, which was an unheard of thing to me--that there were Jewish parents who had gone to college. He got me to talk to a favorite teacher of his. They agreed that I would come in and she would give me a pep talk on colleges, and she really did. She gave me hell. "You have got to go--that is ridiculous--what if no one in the family has gone?" and all of that.

That was in the spring and so I finished my third year. Almost didn't go back because of the financial situation. It was 1937, my father hadn't worked as a carpenter for years. But I went back and I registered in a college preparatory course my fourth year. I took Algebra 101 and German 101, whatever else I should have taken, and I did well and I graduated. We were broke, and luckily the junior college was nearby. It was one of three municipal community colleges. I could walk to it. Well that was really an awakening to me. A dear friend of mine, we are still old buddies, we used to go "booking." We use to go downtown with no money to the used book stores and explore them and sometimes read a certain book. We couldn't buy. We would go back for weeks, go back and read the damn thing. So we called it "booking." We thought it was a very exciting thing to do. When I came to the junior college, I was thunderstruck by the library. It struck me as like the largest library in the world. I had never seen such a library. It was a good library and I just gobbled it up. We did have a very good neighborhood library, but it was nothing like the college library.

I took history and I took French, I took German, and we formed a Philosophy Club. And this was at the junior college. It was the best of the three. It was free of charge. As time went on I started to worry terribly what was I going to do after, because we had no dough. One day I saw on the bulletin board, if you are handicapped you are eligible for state scholarship. So I applied to the university right away and I was admitted and I spent the next three years there--for the bachelor's.

I did virtually nothing but read. I lost some forty pounds, the first year I was at the university. At what point did I start thinking about teaching? I remember a guy asking me--he was a gadfly in the neighborhood, a sort of independent intellectual, a card shark and book crook. You had to watch your books when he visited your house. He said, "What are you going to do?" and I felt put out and I said "Maybe I will teach." Not that I had done much thinking about it. I liked learning and I liked the idea of being with kids who haven't had the chance to learn. At the university, I was told at one point that if I wanted to think about making a living I maybe should get some education credits. So I went over to the School of Education. I happened to meet a guy who was one of the very few great teachers that I ever met. He was not a great scholar but he was a very thoughtful guy and a splendid teacher. Got you to think about teaching problems and who you were teaching and who you were going to teach. And it became clear to me that I would work with kids who resembled my own situation and that never had much thought about going into college work. Those are the kids that really needed special help, the most help. I was always in the position with my relatives, and my parents especially, of trying to interpret what I was doing to them. I wasn't repelled by the idea that I was dealing with people who had no college background, whose families had not gone. To me that was a very familiar situation.

At the university I studied history. I took German all throughout junior college and I knew it fairly well. I passed the German exams on the first try . I was not involved in racial issues yet. As a matter of fact while I was at the university in

1942 I remember some guys forming an organization which became CORE. I met a couple of good teachers but mostly students, extraordinarily good students. The university was one of the few places in the Middle West that did not have a Jewish quota. The university had a large number of Jewish students, but the faculty was almost all non-Jewish. I had few contacts with Blacks as individuals in those years except through the radical politics on campus and even then there were so few to begin with.

My wife and I got marriedat this time. I was twenty-two in September, 1943. This was right during the middle of the war. Both of my brothers were in the Army . So I asked the history department, "Let me take my master's exams." I hadn't worked on my thesis yet, but let me take my master's exam because I want to get the hell out of there. I wanted to do something for the country. So I took my master's exam and passed it. In February of 1944 I got a job and worked, made B-29 engines. That was very educational too because I became very active in organizing the union. I was a line steward, and I was editor of the paper.

After the V-J Day in August of 1945, under the union contract I had top seniority. I could have stayed for another three years,but I didn't want to. I thought I had better go finish my work. I got a call from a junior college. "We called up the university history department and they say you are the only guy around, the others are still in the Army. We need someone in a hurry, just one semester." Well my wife had gone to the junior college before she had gone to the university. So I went there for a semester and I stayed until 1960. When I went there I had to finish my master's thesis, and I did that during the first year. And then I got involved in the educational experience that I would not have given up for anything. I found so much stimulating. I found that I didn't know a damn thing about teaching. I taught in two different branches of the same city college. I started teaching in September 1945, that was a month after V-J Day--very few people were back from the Army. It was during that semester that they really started to come back in numbers. I remember for example that most of the classes were eighty percent women students. But within one year the veterans started to come back. The institution was growing very rapidly. The minimum work load was fifteen hours a week in class, that is five three-hour courses, and that was normal. When the veterans came back in 1946, 1947 in very large numbers under the G.I. Bill and we didn't have enough faculty, we were offered the opportunity to teach overtime. Since it was a community college, most of the courses were freshman and sophomore level. There were very few specialized courses. They were all introductory.

I not only was learning how to teach in a community college, I was learning how to teach period. My principle academic preparation was history, in fact, technically, European History, which I've never taught in my life. There was a great variety of courses and it was very stimulating to me. I was learning a great deal since it was stuff that I hadn't taken, a course for instance in geography. So that was very stimulating, the first five or six or seven years. Many of my colleagues were in the same position. We started to hold meetings outside the department, this was the Social Science Department, there were no separate history or political science departments, about twenty-five members of the department. And we had very excellent discussions with the people from economics, my colleages from history, geography. Everyone was learning. There was so much energy, intellectual energy in that setting. That sort of typified the kind of atmosphere in our department. Our department was unusual in the school as a whole.

Very early in my career it hurt me to give a low grade to a student, but I got out of that very soon. I had to get out of it. I became known as a tough teacher. I found that the kids respected themselves and respected me if I demanded that they learn something. I also went through a whole development on what kind of grading system I ought to have, since the kids I had were on an enormously broad range. I had kids who could barely read and in the same class kids who were headed for a top university. Some teachers said they can't deal with that, they want it split. I felt like that at the very beginning, when I first started teaching. As I taught, I came to value the variety.

I always had essay exams. I came to the conclusion in my own teaching and in my own work that the multiple-choice exam was a terrible obstacle to the improvement of a course. In fact you couldn't change a course because you had to think of the common core. I got to react quite a bit against the multiple-choice exam. I have never used it in my own courses . The stuff that I want to get at, I don't think I can get at that way. I give them five questions to write on. They have to write on two of the five. I classify them by the best answers. Then I have each kid, maybe two or three kids who wrote the best answer read them in class. I am proud that they did a good job and it is so clear to the other students who wrote less satisfactory answers to listen to a really good answer. Very often a Black and white kid would write the best or a Black kid would write the best answer. I thought that was very important that the white kids in class should hear that and be able to judge it themselves. Here is a really top question written with balance and detail with some idea of a thesis. You can't do anything like that with a multiple-choice exam.

When I began I thought a kid, regardless of his background, ought to be told what the requirements were and just measure up to that and if you can't do it, too bad. But that bothered me after a couple of semesters. I saw that was a way of getting rid of the problem instead of solving it, you know, just looking the other way. So I came to think we have to give every person a chance with some help. And it was on that point and the questions of how much help and how do you organize help for such large numbers of kids who have such poor backgrounds that there were just so many battles. Most of them I lost. I am very unhappy even when I think of it.

You know if I had a class at nine I used to come at seven thirty or quarter of eight and I would sit. I would be available for any student who would want to come in for special help, and the special help turned out to be the most elementary help in reading an assignment. First I would ask the kid, many times not a kid, these were older people, in their thirties, "What does this paragraph say?" "I don't know." "What does the sentence say?" "I don't know." "What does this word mean?" "I don't know." You don't know how to read. "Do you have a dictionary at home?" "Yes." "Do you ever use it?" "No." When you work with people on that basis, say several times a week, if they come back --it is strictly up to them--many of them make headway. And I learned that people who ask questions that seem so elementary it wasn't that they were stupid. No one had bothered to teach them along the road before they came to the community college. But as soon as they understood what that long word meant, they could use it and did, and so it is worth spending the time.... The sadness of people being wasted--I feel sad about anyone who is wasted, who is not accorded the dignity that he or she deserves, isn't given an opportunity to show and to learn and to grow. That makes me very sad.

At graduation, I would just sit in the audience and then I would go out and talk to the students and their parents and these are parents, many of them of just ordinary students. And they were just as proud of their kids as the parents of those who were on the honor roll. I used to enjoy greatly many of those parents. Reminded me of my own parents. Then after five or six years the college started to require attendance and we sat on the stage. We had nothing to do with parents anymore. It was all bureaucratized and we had a schedule, your turn this year, Joe Blow's turn next year and all that went by the boards. Maybe it was inevitable because of the number of students had gone up so fast with the veterans.

The veterans were extraordinary. Most of them wanted desperately to finish school and a number of them had not gone through high school, had been drafted. They took the GED and if they passed it a lot of them would come into the college. I began teaching when I was twenty-four, and some of the veterans were older than I was. We started to expand so fast in the late forties and early fifties. Everybody had to be a counselor. I wasn't against it. I had no real formal preparation, but nobody else did either. We had very few full-time professional counselors at the beginning in those early years. Later when I left there were more or less all of them counseling people, psych people mostly.

The idea of a doctorate never occurred to me during the first seven or eight years. Then I remember once in 1950 or 1952 or so, I should say by the way I had always thought of writing some, but I was busy with other things. I always thought that teaching and writing went together. Around 1952 or 1953 I got an idea for a book. I enjoyed that to no end. The essence of the book was this: I had been reading a lot of difficult stuff, difficult for my students, and I always would say to myself, what a shame my students can't read this. It would be so important to them. Then I started asking myself, why don't you write it so they can understand it. So that is what I did. In fact Alvin Gouldner wrote a fine little study on a wildcat strike in a coal mine. He said, "You said it better then I did in my whole book." I only used fifteen pages or so. I was very pleased to be told that. The Ph.D., what did it mean? I was teaching, which I loved to do, I was writing, which I loved to do. However around 1954 or so the thought occurred to me,what if I ever want to leave this place,maybe I should get a doctorate. So I went back to the university and talked to the chairman. I was teaching full-time and extra courses besides. I said I want to write the history of American capitalism. So I wrote a proposal and he brought it to his colleagues and they said no, he has got to come here for a year and take courses. No, I said, to hell with that. That was the first and last thing that I ever had anything to do with a doctorate.

There was redbaiting going on. I remember when I was on what they used to call a trial period. It is a two-year period of trial, probation, and after you would pass it you were on tenure. In 1947 the Cold War was starting to go up then. I had political differences with some people on the campus and there was redbaiting. Any liberal statement was regarded as a red statement. I had that sort of thing. But my colleagues were fine. My boss was fine and very fair minded, and when he probed for any kind of evidence there was no evidence, just baiting. We taught the general course in social science. We dealt with some hot problems you know, politically hot, I think that during the McCarthy period we pulled our necks in somewhat. You had to take an oath; you couldn't be fired, but you couldn't get paid if you didn't take the oath. I took the oath, but we had a group of three teachers, remember we were part of the school system, there were three teachers who said, "No," they are not going to sign it and said they would be test cases. We all contributed money to support them and they didn't get any pay for two years. And they won their case.

In terms of the union, forming a teachers union at a college, I was very active in that in these years. Well I have been a union person; my father was a union man. When I worked in a plant I was very active in the UAW Local and when I came to the community college I guess the first day I wondered, where's the steward, why hasn't a steward come up to me to ask me to join. Then I found out that teachers had no protection at that time. I am speaking of the whole school system including the college teachers. It was extraordinary. The president of the union at one point used the terms "crumbs" positively. He said, " I went into the superintendent last week and I think there is going to be a few crumbs for us." That is the way it was. We had no protection at all.

Remember I grew up during the thirties when the CIO was forming and that was a very great event in my life. I mean the rise of the CIO was a very consequential movement for all of American life, not only for strictly forming unions. I was not so interested in the thirties in race, but as I look back at the rise of the CIO that was very consequential for racial solidarity. It was the first national union that really ever did that on a large scale. When I was at the plant where I worked during '44 and '45 I was a chief steward. Also, I was a co-editor of the newspaper, a weekly newspaper. The UAW was the only union that had a civil rights department with a Black man as the head of it which was never heard of. He is now a judge in Detroit. When I got into the community college it was the same thing, just an extension.

In 1961 I formed an organization called Teachers for Integrated Schools that was preceded by several years of agitation on my part within the union fighting segregation. By 1959-1960 the situation in the schools started to heat up. I got nowhere in the union on this issue. They didn't want to hear about segregation. By 1961 I decided that I couldn't depend on the union. I never took a sabbatical in the thirty-three years that I was there. It is not that I didn't want it. I applied for it several times but the Chicago school system was highly political and they didn't want to give me the time off because they knew what I was doing. The union was part of my world and the racial situation in the schools in the city were part of my world. All my activity in the union on a city-wide basis taught me a great deal about how the school system operated. Being committed and being involved in that world gave me such knowledge, there is no other way to get that knowledge, just no other way.

Then I moved over to the integrated college. It is a much livelier faculty, more open-minded, much more cosmopolitan, whereas at my old college, by the mid-sixties anyway, every one was twenty years older and some of them acted like thirty and forty years older and they were already settled down, everybody had his niche. I remember one guy in the English department --both of us got our tenure at the same time--and I remember his telling me, "Oh wait until I get tenure and then I will speak out." He never spoke out in his life on anything except you know to ask for his check. But by 1965 and 1966 there were an awful lot of such guys. Those were very lively days for me in the civil rights movement and I started to write and you know and I felt the contradiction more and more. At my new community college I was truly an elder statesman. I knew everybody who was anybody in the system. And I was very active in writing and researching. In fact some of my older students knew me from the movement. One of the first students I had, an older woman, came into class the first semester I was at the college in the center of the city, it was maybe eighty-five percent Black, and it was virtually all women. I said, "Where are the Black men?" and this woman said, "You know where they are," half resigned and half arguing, and I looked at her and she looked somewhat familiar but I couldn't place her and then she told me later that we had been in this or that in civil rights together. She was right, I did know. Most of them were in the high schools and the others didn't see any point to going to a community college. Well, more and more were going in and are going into the community college.

When I first came up to the central administration I tried to explain to my boss that he could form an alliance with the Blacks, the minorities in town because this was for most of them their great chance at a college and that this would create very steady political support for him over the years. He just never did it. It was much easier to go to the Mayor and cultivate his friendship and he did. But now the Mayor is dead, and the Black politicians are far more important now than they were seven or six years ago. You read the city's Black newspaper, a daily newspaper. There is much more news about the city college than all the other newspapers put together because that is the college for Black kids. There are some elsewhere but that is the place that they go to.

I worked at central administration in 1967, 1968. It was called the Innovation Center. The idea was that we should give people time off with full pay to think about and produce some idea that would be helpful in the classroom and improve education. So I did that for two years. The next few years I was coordinator of Master Planning. The central office resisted any idea on desegregation. You see the junior college campus sites were chosen by the school board when we were part of it. They chose them the same way they chose all other sites: which ones will keep the racial situation the way that it is. So the result was when I left, we had I think seven campuses. There were three virtually all white, three virtually all Black and the other one was the Loop which was at least somewhat desegregated. But I saw by then that there were no changes going to come. I went back to the classroom. That was the end of my administratorship.

I remember meeting people I worked with up in the central office and some of them said to me, "You seem to have fallen in so easily into the teaching thing." They would say later, "Oh I envy you, you have nc problems, you just teach your course and go home." Then I would say to them, "You can do the same thing , you got tenure, get the hell back if it is so uncomfortable being an administrator. Go back in the classroom." That they won't do, but they envy you.

I got out of it [teaching in community college] what I wanted to do, got more out of it than I expected to actually. I wanted to teach poor kids and I sure as hell did. I had the feeling most all the time that I was appreciated by my students. I don't mean all the time. I rarely felt that I was dealing with students who were there because their fathers demanded that they be there, curiously enough, even though I had what conventionally were called poor students, financially poor, and they are not the type that go on into the university. Nevertheless, many of them were there because they wanted to be. A number of them were older people, especially mothers whose kids were grown. They were highly motivated people. The veterans were the most highly motivated of all. In the city college very poor Black students were highly motivated, because many of them had left school years ago and now really felt the lack of an education. They were coming back very intent on making it. Some did and some didn't, a lot didn't. If I could have everything that I have here if I could have it back there, I'd rather be there right now, because I still feel that the individual students need me more than these individual students need me. But I need certain other things that I can't have in a community college and that is why I left it.

If you read the history of some of the early junior colleges--the first one is in Joliet, Illinois, then in Chicago, Crane College --both of them were begun as adjunct of the public school system, located in one of the high school buildings in a corner. The connection between high school, between public schools and the community college continued and therefore laid a very heavy handicap on the kind of administrative thinking that developed. I remember in California, I met a president of a junior college and superintendent of junior college districts; they were high school people, and all their thinking was along that line. The same thing in my city, except we were older as junior colleges, so there was more autonomy but nevertheless we actually were part of the school system. I always resented that because I felt it was holding back the institution.

We could have helped kids much more than we did and more than we do. I regarded the junior college, community college as the only chance or the last chance for many many kids, the only chance for Black kids especially. Except for very few the community college is the only chance that they will have to go to a college. Some few of them will go on but very very few Black kids in that city will go directly to a university out of the high school. For those kids the community college was the only chance they would have, and it is very important for a community to have such an institution. I was always proud to be part of it. The counselors in the surrounding universities used to say, you flunked out here, you should go to another community college and if you compile a good record there we will take you back.

I remember we had a sensational success story. One guy flunked out of the university came to our community college and he was sort of an immature kid but we noticed that, whatever the tests were, he was way up. My colleague and I took on this guy. He used to hang around our office all the time, and he was an excellent student. He started getting A's, graduated, and went to the university, on the honor roll and got his Ph.D there finally . He has written two books already and in the first one he thanks my colleague and me. He didn't say exactly for what. The reader wouldn't know the exact circumstances but we know. So that is a sensational exception.

So being associated with a community college that meant so much to so many kids was worthwhile as far as I was concerned. I don't want to give you the impression that I thought it was a haven of scholars because it wasn't. In terms of the students it was very rare that we got a real scholarly kid. Nor am I saying the teachers especially were scholarly because they weren't. Very few of them ever wrote anything and so I was sort of an odd ball in doing what I did. Most of them were damn good teachers. Many times out kids would come back and say, "You know, we never had it so good as we had it here."

If you ask me to look over my career, I think of it as a very positive thing, but it could have been more positive. So much of it was a struggle against inadequate thinking , you know, at the top. The administration seemed to be exceedingly interested in making the colleges primarily vocational schools. There were special payments that you get from the state for vocational education. I said to my administrator friend, "What if you didn't get special payments?" He said, "Then I wouldn't be interested." Cut and dried. It was a very very uneducational reason and something done in contempt. I remember a Black campus primarily on the South Side. They introduced an auto mechanics course. No Black students took it. Nobody wanted to study it but they had figured out that they are so financially poor that they would be interested primarily in getting out there and getting a job as soon as possible. That isn't what they are there for, but that was the whole tenor. Make it vocational. And the vocations were not so great. Auto mechanic! You can just learn more hanging around the station you know. There was such inadequate thinking of that sort.

There was so much politics having nothing to do with education. By community they meant, who owns the machine shop in the neighborhood, what stores there are and the kids that work in the store, but not what are some problems,urgent social problems, facing them in the community. That small-mindedness was a constant pain on the Black campuses, it was pretty obvious. That changed a little bit in the late sixties for a while when the Black students just took over a school and said this is what we want and this is what we want stopped. It changed a little bit after that.

To teach there you have to teach at least four courses in each semester. That is one of the primary reasons that I left. In the junior college there is not publish or perish. You are not expected to write, to research. By doing research and writing you are even allowing suspicion, that is to say, "What, is this guy up to? He is writing, you know, what for? Doesn't have to. Something strange about it." So it is anti-intellectual. The whole approach is that we are here in order to teach and teaching is unrelated to the life of the mind apparently. There is a cloud that descends and it says you don't have to do research.

I remember we wanted to re-think the whole social science program. I worked out a course in great detail. I worked out an outline and subject matter. So I was explaining it to my colleagues and I noticed two of them were asleep. That was a fateful day for me because I put away that outline and we never did anything with it and I have it here. I thought, what the hell am I doing,I am putting these guys to sleep? Some others felt that we've got our John Stuart Mill "On Liberty" and I am used to teaching it. The university still teaches John Stuart Mill, so it must be good. I think it was around that time that I first said to myself that something is profoundly wrong here. There was a hesitation to take a situation and think your way through to it. It was a disposition to take the easiest way out, the customary way, and that was diffused throughout the entire school. It was not only some colleagues and a few administrators, all institutional research people, the whole system. There was no interest to sit down and grapple with the problem except let's say when Black students occupied you had an emergency and they wanted to know what could be done to get out of it.

It is not true thatkids who were very poor, white or Black, that they are not somehow not intellectual, not interested in things intellectual. They are usually not given anything to think of intellectually. They are interested in fundamental questions as much as anybody else. There is no intellectual reason to cheapen or lower your level of interest. The problem is how do you meet them at a certain point where they are. That has been a lifelong interest of mine. I remember a Black about twenty-six or twenty-seven. I had him in Social Science 101, so I hadn't seen him for a couple of years. "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I graduated and I am going to a technician school." I said, "Well, why don't you go into an engineering school? What grades do you have in math?" And he said, "Pretty fair." "Well then,why don't you just apply for engineering?" "Well, I don't know." He didn't know why he didn't apply but it was something that was distant from him. He had gotten the idea that he was not good enough to apply to engineering schools. That is what you have to work with: "I am not good enough to think about big problems, I am not good enough to go into medicine. I have got to go into a medical assistant program."

I have faith that if we ever build a school system and a community college system and a university system that can deal with poor people, children of poor people, we will be amazed at how they take up the intellectual life. I want them to change the world. Our world stinks. That's it. Our world is not anywhere near the world that human beings can make for themselves, for other human beings, and I want them to change the world, I want to change the world.

The intellectual life is related to changing the world, making a more just, a freer, society. That is, I am looking at a society that we live in which is an unjust racist society, that is both unjust to a lot of people that are not minorities and it is a racist society. It must be changed, I want to do what I can toward it. Part of what I can do about it happens to be an intellectual job. So since I know there are so few others doing that part of it, I've dedicated my writing and so on dealing with that. So it is not that I have a contempt for ideas, I mean how could I do the work. When I wrote my book I ran across a number of intellectual problems that were not solved in the literature, so I had to have a try at it. The government actually pays money for someone to make the kind of studies that I used to do at night. They actually are paying people to write, whereas the first time I wrote such a book, I wrote it on my own time.

I am not cynical at all but I have doubts from time to time. For example, it is not at all preordained that we won't end up like South Africa someday. We may have in this country and maybe soon, who knows, we may have a situation where racism will be practiced to a greater degree. It is quite possible that we will never have an integrated society, in fact it is even likely in our lifetimes. I am a historian and I know that we've had periods of time for X hundred years when nothing happens so to speak. Do you remember Edgar Snow ? Edgar Snow went to China and he interviewed Mao TseTung. I remember the last one. Snow was at the doorstep. He is saying good-by and he is never to see him again. He said to Mao, "Give me a last word, " and Mao said, "In a thousand years from now they will laugh at all of us, they will laugh at us, you, me, and at Marx and at Engels and so on because they will have learned so much more than we know." I think that is a pretty good view. I don't take the view that a thousand years from now people will be the same. I can't imagine that they will be the same.

My father, he read the Jewish paper and he knew the prayers by heart. He never complained about life. I remember we were driving when I was a little kid by a certain big apartment house and he said about ten years or so ago that building was built and he applied for a job, and the foreman said, "We don't hire Jews" straight out, good-by. I always used to go by that house and that was the first time I ever learned anti-Semitism. My experience is by no means unusual. In the sixties the kids who were active in the civil rights movement, it was a heavy Jewish contingent. I believe it has to do with the emphasis on justice. It is especially appealing to Jews, because of their life circumstances and how they lived always as minorities in other countries. Justice is the one thing that they have rarely got.

A junior college in Chicago occupies just about the lowest rank in prestige in the academic world. But I really don't know a difference between a community college teacher versus a good university teacher. I remember I was told that there is a distinctive aspect to community college teaching, that you are interested in the individual student and you sort of nurse that student, sort of like little children. I had a colleague, for instance, when he would teach in Soc 102, he would give them a virtual outline of the book. I never did that. He believed that that was a distinctive kind of thing in a junior college that somehow you have to baby the kids along. I don't believe that. I find it hard to distinguish or single out any specific respect in which a community college teacher should be a different kind of a teacher or a different kind of human being than a university teacher. I just can't conceive of one. I have been told that there are such differences, but I just don't know them.

I believe the more we try to separate the junior college or the community college from the whole domain of higher education the worse off it is. Now we have this awful phrase "post-secondary education." It isn't even a commitment to a college. It only says there will be something after high school, not beyond but after high school. At least a community college has the word "college" in it. The more we draw distinctions within the realm of higher education or certain parts of it and say we have a community college and now we have post-secondary education, I think we make it meaningless. I think it is pernicious, although it is quite popular.

I don't object to connecting up vocation with higher education. In fact at the university every other guy is in a vocational program. He can't wait to go into teaching or medicine or law or some damn thing there --vocation,I don't object to vocation.If somebody wants to go into nursing, a part of their program must be a consideration of the role of medicine in modern life and an analysis of the industry, problems in medical care, the distribution of medical care, the economics, the history of medicine. In other words I want to humanize that occupational interest. But they don't want to do that. When you ask me what I think about occupationalism, I don't say, down with it. If you come from a wealthy, middle-class family you don't have to worry about occupations. But if you come from a working-class family you damn well have to. The struggle there is what occupations. So it is not occupationalism as such but what kind of occupations and what context you put them in as far as curriculum and historical context. Because that is the way in reality they are. But the anti-intellectualism of the community college people works against that. I want a more complete conception of education rather than taking one aspect and saying that is legitimate and the other one is not legitimate.

Profile

LAWRENCE BAUER

(Lawrence Bauer, a man in his fifties, teaches sociology at a community college in a small city in New York State. He was interviewed twice in his office and once in his home during the spring of 1982.)

I was raised in a family of small businessmen. My father and brothers all operated men's clothing stores in the Midwest. I was a depression baby. I was born in 1931 and had the experience of seeing my father go bankrupt in his business, having to sell his business, move out on a farm and make it through the thirties. My father was an old German type and married late in life,then had five children, four sons and a daughter. His hope was that all of us would go into business. He actually bought the stores for each of us to get into business and had us set up to go into business; it was quite a disappointment to him that we didn't. I have some memory of his coming home and telling my mother he had lost his business. I was about five years old. He came up the stairway and he got down on his knees and took me in his arms. He was crying and he said to my mother, "I've lost my business." And he held me very tightly and then said, "We are going to have to sell the car and the house and move out to the country and take a farm and try to make it."

I remember the next four or five years on the farm his going to various companies trying to reestablish his credit . He went to Manhattan Shirt Company, he went to the Malary Hat Company, he traveled all over, he went to Numbush Shoes, he went to Arrow Shirt, he went every place; and tried to get credit but no one would give it to him. He managed to pay back all his debts and he was very proud of that. He paid back every debt that he owed as a result of bankruptcy and reestablished his credit, got back in business and really made a killing in the forties. I worked all through those years. I started working in the store in the sixth grade. I remember going in and riding my bicycle and dusting shoe boxes and waiting on customers in the sixth and seventh grade. My father made me do it, I had no choice. He couldn't get help and so my brother and I were told to be there the minute school was out and we worked every day until six o'clock and went home and had dinner and I stayed up and studied until midnight every night. I was a straight-A student all through school . And my father was very proud of that.

I would go after school and then Friday night the store was open until nine o'clock and I would work until nine o'clock and we worked a twelve-hour day on Saturday. Then on holidays and seasonal days of big business we worked a twelve-hour day. Every day from the first of December until Christmas day we worked a twelve-hour day all day. There were even days when he would take us out of school because business was so heavy he needed us.

There was quite an age gap between my mother and my father. She was fifteen years younger than he and she was a school teacher. When she married she made the decision that she didn't want to stay in teaching, she wanted to be a housewife. I think she saw her role as being the mother and housekeeper and that sort of thing, and didn't feel bad about it. She did a lot of the bookkeeping for my father. I remember he would bring home these big ledger books and she would keep the charge account records.

Up until eighth grade I was a trouble maker. Teachers were calling me in all the time admonishing me to either straighten up or ship out. I was disruptive in classes and they were always telling me that I was never working to my potential. Something happened in the eighth grade, I don't know, but about half way through the eighth grade I just suddenly took school work seriously. I became aggressive about getting A's and being the top student in the class. Latin was a course that really got me going in terms of getting started academically, and I took two years of Latin and then went on to take three years of French and I only had one C, in physical education, and it really upset me. I had straight A's from ninth grade on. I was mostly influenced by one of my older brothers who went into the ministry. He encouraged me to go into a liberal arts background. I went to a liberal arts college in Ohio and majored in English with a minor in philosophy and history and religion. My last year of undergraduateschool my older brother again encouraged me to apply to various theological schools. I was accepted at several and I went to Yale Divinity School .

During my senior year at college I began discussing with my father about the possibility of applying to graduate school. And I think that's when he realized that I was not going into business. He was very disappointed. But at the same time he was very encouraging. He said he was willing to support me financially. I got an excellent scholarship offer and he paid the difference. My experience at college: although I had a good academic average, my memory of college was mostly the fraternity and social life and extra-curricular life that I had there. There were certain faculty who really did challenge me. I was especially intrigued by a man in philosophy whom I remember, in logic and in ethics. There was another man in the religion department who got a response from me but other than that I found most of the course work the kind of thing that was drudgery. The Korean War was on at the time and I didn't want to go into the Korean War and by being what they called pre-enrolled in seminary you were exempted from the draft . If I graduated from college without it, I would have been drafted right into the army. I didn't want to be forced into the military or into the business, but at the same time I wasn't precisely sure where I was headed. My father definitely conveyed to me the idea that I could really do better in business and that teaching and ministry and the human service kind of life was not going to get me anywhere financially. But I think he was speaking from his depression experience too. From what he had suffered in the thirties .

Divinity school blew my mind. I just didn't know anything about Eastern life, about New England, about the culture. I didn't know the difference between liberal and conservative. I was put right into classes with some of the greatest theologians in the world. I felt as if all of a sudden I was now in a world of people who came out of a much broader experience and background, not only instructors and professors and teachers but classmates who were so far ahead of me. I got ahold of everything I could read, I got a hold of every journal in the field, I began getting into conversations with people just as long and lengthy as I could to probe their thinking and find out what was going on.

The tension just got unbearable between me and my father. It got so bad that I wouldn't go home for vacations because I couldn't talk to him. We would get in discussions over issues and I would express my views and he would just tell me flatly to shut up. He wouldn't hear it. One Thanksgiving I went home and we got into a discussion on the issue of race and ethnicity and religion . I finally remember saying, "Dad, is there anybody that you like, you don't like Jews, you don't like Black people, you don't like Catholics, you don't like Italians, who's left?" I had taken on such liberal views in their eyes that I just was not acceptable. I remember when John Kennedy ran for president, my mother said, "Please don't tell Dad that you voted for him."

My divinity school internship was in Miami Beach . Miami Beach is where I met my first wife . She was a member of the church there, and I married there at the end of the internship and then went back to divinity school. I was given a total opportunity to get an experience of every part of the parish ministry . I went back and finished up and graduated in 1957 and began right at the beginning of the year interviewing with congregations and making a choice as to where I wanted to go . It was very much a year of turmoil for me. I chose a rural farm parish in eastern New York where I went in 1957. And stayed for five years. I probably would have been happy the rest of my life if I had stayed there. But I was beginning to feel that I wanted to get into something that would give me an opportunity to express my kind of social concern which I began to feel in the late fifties and early sixties. There was an opening in Florida and they called me down and interviewed me. They asked me to go down and start a new church project . I went there at the end of 1961. And stayed there three and a half years. And that was where I got in trouble.

I got the building project started, the congregation organized, I went out into the neighborhood knocking on doors to find people. I got a congregation of about two hundred and fifty people organized and got a new building put up and totally paid for the day it was dedicated. At the same time I was getting involved in human rights work. They did not have a human relations commission for the State of Florida at that time and Governor Collins somehow got ahold of my name and asked if I would be willing to be on the first Human Rights Commission and I agreed to be on it. As the consequence of that, I began getting involved in civil rights activities in the South and I began attending meetings and demonstrations and marches and things like that and writing letters and it began being reflected more in my preaching and the kinds of things I was writing in my weekly church newsletter to the people, and it all culminated in 1964-65 with an attack on my church by the Ku Klux Klan and a threat from the Klan that I should get out of the state. They didn't totally destroy it, they did a tremendous amount of damage to the building and this upset my people terribly.

I contacted the FBI and the FBI came to me and said, "We will put a guard on you twenty-four hours a day," because at that time I was getting anonymous threat letters and phone calls in the middle of the night. The FBI put a tap on my phone and I had to turn over to them all of the anonymous letters that were coming to me as well as carry a gun which I would not do. And they said, "Well, if you are not going to carry a gun, we are not going to protect you." And I said, "No way am I going to carry a gun." I had been warned by southern Christian leaders that if you carry a gun any policeman or FBI agent can shoot you and claim self-defense if you have a gun on your body. Then they said, "Well, okay, we will give you three months to get out . We will guarantee your protection for three months," and the church by that time was very upset over me. When a congregation wants to get rid of you, they have a nice polite way of doing it, they just don't give you a raise in salary and they cut your benefits, make it so uncomfortable for you that you just can't stay there. The FBI came to me on four or five different occasions. One of the times they turned me over to the local sheriff to be fingerprinted and all of this they said was for my protection in case anything happened to me. This was a time when people were disappearing or being shot at all the time in the South, and the FBI agent said to the sheriff--I'll never forget it, because it put a shudder down my back--he said, "You take care of the Reverend," and the sheriff looked at him and winked and said, "You can be sure we'll take care of him." And that was when I knew I had to get out because I didn't have the protection of the police, the local police. Nor was I sure that I had the protection of the FBI at that point.

I remember the time I went to Washington when we were going into Arlington Cemetery. There were about 6,000 of us on a march, priests and rabbis, the Berrigan brothers and everybody involved in the anti-war movement was there, and the Pentagon had said that we could go into Arlington Cemetery and march if we did not have any speeches. I was about ten feet behind Martin Luther King when we walked from the White House to the cemetery and we got inside Arlington Cemetery and we were all carrying American flags and we were trying to make the point that the right wing doesn't have a monopoly on patriotism in the country and that we were doing this out of our concern for the country as much as any one else. And Martin Luther King did one of the most beautiful things I ever saw. We got in there, all 6,000 standing there, and he said, "Let's bow our heads and pray," and he gave a thirty-minute prayer that said everything that had to be said while these army men were standing there with loaded guns and bayonets all around us. No speeches were made, but you couldn't stop him from that prayer.

I was probably pretty naive at the time. I was in my young thirties. I was not fully aware of the real threat level of what was involved. By 1966 I definitely knew that I was going to leave the parish ministry. I began going back to graduate school. I matriculated at New York University in 1967 because I wanted to go into college teaching. I really had the feeling that the church was not the place where I could express the kind of social concern I really felt. I started part-time teaching here as an adjunct at the time. But then, when my marriage broke up, I had to stop the program for two years because I was left alone with three children. I had to keep a full-time job and carry all the overtime teaching I could to support myself, trying to keep the pieces of life together as well as I could . I don't know how I made it, frankly, through that first year, I really don't, and my colleagues here to this day don't either, but I held on somehow. I started here in January of 1972 full-time.

The social problems course that I teach is the largest required course in the college. It's required of every student who comes to the college for every program. We all try to follow the same syllabus so that the students get as much the same course as they can from whoever takes the course. I am really excited by the course because it gets into the kinds of issues that I've been accustomed to being involved in over my whole life. I can bring so much of my own personal experience to these issues that I really never get tired of the course.

I also teach at both a maximum security prison and at a minimum security prison. The one is a fortress-like structure fifty feet high of solid concrete, ten feet thick, no one has ever escaped from it. It has eleven rows of iron bars you have to go through to get inside to the school. You go into a prison to teach a marriage course or a social problem course to the very people who are supposedly the social problem and their feeling towards you is -- don't come in here to try to change my behavior. They resent anything of that sort, they don't want anything in terms of indoctrination. The guards go through everything--your briefcase, your lecture notes. Every time I go in--I've gone in there for ten years and they know me by face -- every time I go in there, they go through the same thing. The college, you see, cannot require you to teach in the prison, you have to volunteer to do it. The college as a matter of fact pays what it calls hazard pay for going into the prisons because of the risk factor of going in there. It's about a $700 to $800 a year difference.

I was teaching a class there one day when Attica occurred. I remember I had taken in a cassette recorder and I was playing a lecture and right in the middle of the class storm troopers came into the room with helmets and masks over their faces, and shields that looked like what gladiators carried in ancient times, and machine guns, and one man put a machine gun in my back and said, "Put your hands up." The other guards grabbed my notes, my recorder, my equipment, everything, just dumped them on a tray and said, "Don't say a word, we are going to get you out of here and if you stop you are dead." The word had gotten through the grapevine in the prison system just unbelievably fast that there was going to be a riot. I held my hands up and went straight out of the prison. I felt safer with the inmates than I did with the guards and I still do. The inmates would have protected me, the guards would have not hesitated to kill me. I still don't feel safe with the guards. They resent my coming in. Anything that goes in there that smacks of rehabilitation or an effort to try and do something to raise their level of academic or intellectual performance they resent, because most of them have never finished anything but high school and most of them are only a step above the guys in there.

Forty percent of the inmates are men who would be classified as sociopathic, they have no reason not to do anything to you because they are in there on--in some cases--triple and quadruple life sentences which means that they will never get out. I go in, the men are usually coming from the cafeteria either from breakfast or lunch because our classes start at eight o'clock and at twelve-fifteen and I have a nice, good feeling about the men. They are ninety percent Black or Hispanic, most of them are right out of Harlem and the Bronx. Most of them are what I call kids, between eighteen and twenty-five and there are a few older men but most of them are young, Black and Hispanic kids. They size you up very quickly. They know and they trust me.

It is culture shock when I come back here from the prison. There are many times I will teach a class at the prison the same day on the same subject and I can't get a word in edgewise with the students at the prison, and I will come back to the college with the same presentation and they will sit there and look at me and I can't get a discussion started for anything. They can't relate to it or get involved in it or identify with it in anyway. It is just two different worlds all together. In some sense the prison work represents the real world more than what I see here. These guys are more informed on current events and current social issues, they are more interested in them, than the community college student here who is taking a course because it's a requirement. They are a captive audience and you have to, you know, really provoke them to get them into a discussion which I sometimes deliberately do. But I don't have to do that in the prison. On the other hand I am exhausted when I finish class because they are just loaded with questions and they want to know everything: "Go on" and "Explain what you mean" and "Say more." It reduces their time in prison by going to the college. They go five days a week, they study all night, and all weekend. And so there is high motivation among them.

I think the community college, in the time that I have observed it, has become a college for a lot of people who see it as a training institution rather than an academic institution--being tooled up to do something--and that disappoints me. So they come into the liberal arts courses with a built-in resentment. I see that in my classes. Except for the marriage and family course, most people don't see the connection between why they have to take this course and why they are at the community college. That deeply disturbs me. That's not preparing anybody to live in the real world. That's preparing you to go out and do something but not be aware of a person's social responsibility. It disturbs me to see the apathetic kinds of responses that students make to these crucial controversial issues that we are dealing with in this world. There are some who genuinely do catch ahold and they get excited about it they get turned on by the course and that I like. But by and large you can talk about an issue for fifty minutes and have a whole class sit there and stare at you with a blank expression and not say a word. And you can say things that you know deep down inside they utterly reject from their value system. I come out of the prison exhilarated from it, and I come out of the classroom here with a feeling that I have not been successful in accomplishing what I went in to do. It's depressing to me, the feeling that these students are going to go out into the world and virtually separate their intellect from their work.

I have, over the years, come to the point where I've had to accept the fact that I can't make that connection with them and that I have to be satisfied with the fact that I may have not done anything more than provoke them. I think that the community college faculty is seen as somewhere between a high school teacher and a college professor and I'm not sure where that is. So you get these comments, I get these comments, from people in education. I can see the faces of the people and I know that they see the community college that way.

I am sort of jokingly referred to in the department as the guy that reads all the time. I try to spend at least two hours every day in reading preparation time . I feel that it is imperative to the nature of the courses that I do to be updated, and I have at least three or four books going all the time. I will come in and shut the door. My students know that they are welcome to come anytime, I don't restrict it to the hours that we have to keep. The community college concept of a teacher is the classroom teacher, I think it is becoming more and more that. Not that there isn't studying and research; but I can't separate the two, I find that the preparation is very much a part of the teaching. Only twenty percent of our student body now is in the liberal arts and languages. Maybe it is a confronting them with something they can't deal with or don't want to deal with.

I'm in a funny kind of position having come out of the ministry and being an ordained minister for seventeen years before I went into teaching. It's been interesting to observe how people respond to me in terms of the status of the occupation. Being a clergyman was an occupation that conferred a tremendous amount of status. And then coming into teaching there was a little bit of a shift in gears; I had the feeling that the occupation had a lot of the same kind of status that the clergy had but people reacted to me on a much more honest basis. At the college the receptionist at the desk who answers the phone will call for Reverend B. on the phone, even though I'm not a Reverend (I keep my ministerial standing), but the status of the Reverend idea is still more in her mind than the status of the college teacher.

When I got my doctorate, I was quite interested to see how that kind of change would affect my title, what people would call me. I thought that the Ph.D. would be a title that would immediately subsume the place of Reverend but it didn't. The idea of being called professor, I've never once been called a professor at the community college by a student. I get called professor when I go out to the prison by the students there because they look upon the status of the community college teacher as a professor, but the students in the community college don't.

It was really difficult to try and get a doctorate. I was forty years old when I started the program and by then most people are through and not even interested in further graduate study. It meant commuting to New York City twice a week, getting a morning schedule to get away, going to summer school every day for three to four weeks out of the summer. But I got up to the point of the dissertation and then I requested a sabbatical to write it and I got approval for it. The college gives real importance to people taking sabbaticals to pursue graduate work. They really regard that as the number one basis for granting sabbaticals. The university where I got my doctorate has a special room where they conduct their oral exams. There is a woman who records the whole thing and they have a bottle of sherry on the table for the party afterwards. I sat at one end of the table and the committee sat around like this, and my chairman was opposite me and they all had copies of my dissertation which they had read before. They asked me to leave the room and they passed around the ballot and they could either vote to pass or to defer or to fail. I had five pass votes and I saved them; they are in my dissertation.

My feeling prior to getting the degree was that this is probably the most important goal of my life. I felt that it carried a degree of respect that I didn't have before by my peers and by my students and by the administration of the college. I remember taking a copy of the dissertation to the president of the college. He made a point of congratulating me and having it filed and put in the library of the college . And I went to my department head and said, "I have my doctorate now and I'd like to have a name plate that says Dr. B. on it," and he wouldn't approve it. He was very definitely threatened by all this, he didn't like the idea of someone under him having a doctorate. I have a very strong sense of personal satisfaction from getting it as a symbol of my own ability to make that accomplishment at that age of life. I would imagine probably forty to fifty percent of the faculty at college have all of the course work but have not finished the research and the dissertation. Have not made the effort to go that final step that you have to take to get the doctorate. It really represents something in terms of how you are perceived by your colleagues in terms of making that final extra push, that effort to do that research and buckle down to the nitty gritty of the hard part of the doctorate.

I think the administration and the trustees of the community college see the role of the faculty principally as one of being in the classroom. They are continually trying to increase our contact-hour load. When I first started at the college I was carrying twelve contact hours a semester and working three extra for overtime pay. I'm now up to eighteen and all of that has happened in the ten years that I've been here. They're also increasing class size and they jokingly talk about the fact that we only work fifteen hours a week. That actually was said by a county legislator at the budget hearings of the college, that they are only working twelve hours a week in the English department. So they are continually pressuring us to get up to eighteen, and I perceive the days that are coming when they are going to get us up to twenty-one a week. I see my role as one who should devote as much time in classroom preparation and in study as I do in the classroom, if not more time. I think it is just crucial that I have myself as thoroughly updated and informed as I can be to go into the classroom. So the time that I spend here in my study at home or in my study at the college, on my own, doing my own reading and writing is very important to me. And I consider that of utmost value as far as what I am in the classroom.

I don't feel that going to the community college from the ministry was a horizontal step. I lost status as far as my social role, and I did not become a professor. That's about as well as I can state it . I became a teacher. As an occupation, professor is seen as one of lots of intellectual work and stimulation as opposed to a teacher who is seen as an eight to three job kind of thing. For example, I am told that I have to be on campus six hours a day. The dean has sent the message down that faculty should spend six hours a day on the campus. I see no reason for that. I don't see the occupation as one that is confined to a number of hours of work on the campus. When I started, I used to require a term paper for every course and read it and spend great time responding to the paper for the student. Today I can't do that and, in a way, the student is suffering. I see my colleagues now resorting to testing systems that really disturb me. They are giving all multiple-choice tests and they are taking them out of test manuals that are provided by the publisher of the textbook. They run it through a computer and grade it; the students never see where they missed a question, or whether they got a right answer. They don't know anything except a score. I will not give an objective test. I give essay questions, and I write answers to them and I tell the students where they didn't give a complete answer, or where they didn't develop it as it was in the class and in the book. Writing for me is another very concrete thing I can point to. I don't think that the college would be supportive of me in any way to write a book.

I'll be very blunt with you, I'm trapped. There is no place I can go except down. At fifty making $30,000 a year with the tremendous overhead that I have economically and with the college pushing early retirement incentive at fifty-five, knowing that I can be replaced in five years with a Ph.D. for $14,000 doesn't give me much place to go. And there is no mobility in my profession, absolutely none. "Trapped" is the only word I can use to describe it. At fifty-five I could leave this college and go into retirement for ninety percent income for the first year and whatever the percentage is for next five years until I'm eligible for social security benefits, and take a part-time job selling shirts again like I did for my father. What I hope to do is to go right on until I'm sixty-five but I know the pressures are going to be strong to get me out. Every fifty-five year old man and woman up there is leaving or has left.

Profile

JUDITH WESLEY

(Judith Wesley is in her late forties and teaches Psychology and Anthropology at a rural community college in New York State. She was interviewed twice in her office and once at her home in the winter of 1982.)

I guess I think of it as an accident that I am here. I think it's probably the best kind of job that anybody could think of having. I don't necessarily mean working in this particular college, but teaching at a college level or university level is probably the best kind of job to have. In the sense that it usually doesn't hurt anyone, occasionally it helps someone, and it's non-polluting. Teaching, along with piano tuning and bicycle repairs, seems to me to be the only honest kind of labor.

I was born in Philadelphia and lived in Philadelphia in the suburbs until I went away to school. I was the oldest in our family. I have two younger brothers. My family was very middle-class. My father was a college graduate. My mother--I don't think she finished high school. They both thought that education was extremely important and like most families at their level thought that the best thing they could do for their children was to provide good education for them. So there was never any question about whether I would go to college . It was just something that was preprogrammed as much as anything that I genetically acquired from them, that I would go to college.

My father was stern and remote and unplayful; he was a very serious person and took the world and himself and life very seriously. My mother was very much like her mother and she was much easier and much softer. My mother softened a lot of what my father took so terribly seriously, but as a child I was quite afraid of him, not of him physically, but terribly afraid of disappointing him. I grew up into consciousness during the Second World War, which was a very distressing time, and remember my father being overseas and all the problems that that brought to the family. But I was an early teenager by that time, eleven, twelve, thirteen years old. I always felt sort of lost in a crowd in school. I was never the best at anything, I was always kind of one of the crowd. Never did very well in mathematics, to my father's disgust. Then we moved from the city to the suburbs when I was just starting fourth grade and from fourth grade on I rode a school bus. And went to suburban schools and then spent my junior and senior high school years in the boarding school.

My parents thought I was not doing very well in the local high school. So they sent me to a girls' boarding school in central Pennsylvania. I did not want to go. But I had a wonderful time, I just loved it. During my senior year, the decision about where are you going to go to college has to be made, but I didn't know anything at all about colleges. I had an English teacher at that school that I sort of liked and I was interested in that course. She had graduated from the state college so I thought, that's where I will go.

I started out my freshman year at the state college majoring in zoology and entomology. I don't know where that came from, some idea that I had, which left me with freshman year science courses that just swamped me. I mean I couldn't even breathe under those, you know, freshman, heavy, heavy schedule of science courses for which I was not prepared. So after my first semester I was put on some kind of probationary status. Then I changed my major to animal husbandry. I got into cows for a while; it's an agricultural school. Then I became an English major. I majored in English Lit and discovered learning in books, and took nothing but English courses and stopped going out for dates. Gave up beer parties, football games and locked myself in the library and spent my whole junior year very much like that. In my senior year at boarding school I had discovered that people spend their whole lives reading poetry and literature, and I was endlessly fascinated by how you could talk about books and about all the books that were written. I did a lot of reading, not much understanding. I wanted to be part of that, it came to have a lot of value for me. I valued those teachers in ways that I didn't value other teachers. It seemed to me a whole library was filled with this kind of stuff, and that I was just dabbling on the outside of it and really wanted to be part of that--that kind of academic or intellectual achievement.

I remember the offer of any kind of helpful planning was really missing. That was a long time ago, that was in 1949. I was taking a couple of four-credit chemistry courses--terrible--I simply did not have the math background to do that. I remember, in one course particularly, in order to do the work you had to use a slide rule and I had never learned to use a slide rule and I was dead from the second week. I just could not do it. And it never occurred to me to go ask for help. It was a huge school and I didn't see how I could possibly have access to the teacher; huge lecture halls and I was used to classes of, you know, maybe ten.

I was having trouble with this French course and thought, well, the only way I'm going to get through this is to learn to speak French and the place to do that is in France; the problem is, how am I going to get to France ? And I saw on a bulletin board an advertisement for a college that offered a junior year in France. That's just for me. So I wrote, got an application form, filled it out, and was turned down. Well, I said, okay, I'll do it myself. First thing that I have to do is to quit school and work and save my money and then go, and that's what I did. And I wrote a letter to the Sorbonne and said I wanted to be a student and they sent me an application so then I was studying at the Sorbonne for a year. It was horrible. I mean I was all by myself. I didn't know a single soul in Paris, I couldn't speak French, I had like one or two semesters of college French and it was just a totally different experience. Going to school in a huge lecture amphitheater and you know one person way down in the middle and I didn't know how to behave there. I never really quite figured it out. All of the examinations were oral, conducted in French and I mean I couldn't understand the lectures, let alone read any of the text material. But throughout that year, because there was no alternative, I did learn to speak French. I certainly did. I learned to survive, lived in a sleazy little hotel with a little garret room at the top on the Left Bank, and spent time in cafes. It was not a happy year. It was lots of hard work. I worked as a maid and I gave English lessons and I survived and ate boiled potatoes, onions, and stuff like that. Made my money last a long time.

I went to Greece. I traveled widely that summer and met this guy and we took an apartment together. Still felt very odd to me that I was doing something very exotic, living with a man, my goodness. My father came to visit me that year, and I had to move him out of the apartment, couldn't share that with my father.

I ran out of money. And also I was ready to come home, I wanted to come home. I had unfinished business at home. I had a degree to finish and I think I was aware of that. And I had sort of secretly, to myself, set a time limit of two years. So that two-year time limit was up and I wanted to see everybody. I had unfinished business and it clearly was in the United States, not Europe.

I no longer lived in a dormitory. I rented a room in town and was very much on the edge of the little university town. I met John who had also dropped out for a couple of years and come back. So we spent a lot of time together and then got married when I graduated. I thought that's what everybody did, that this is what it feels like when you are ready to get married. I guess this is how it happens and that this is the time. And so okay, let's do it, and so we did. I didn't even go to graduation ceremonies. I was just finishing credits. I was really on the edge of that whole system.

John was transferring to NYU but I had other priorities at that time, which were to somehow live in New York City and get a job and work while John finished his last year at NYU. And I don't think I had any thoughts beyond that. I certainly didn't have any thoughts about a career. Nor did I feel any distress that I didn't have thoughts into the future. The future seemed to be falling in place and it would somehow work itself out and it would largely be dependent on what happened to John or what he decided to do. Never occurred to me that I would work at something that would also be commensurate with who I thought I was or what my interests were. I thought people just, you know, worked at jobs to earn money. So I worked for an electric company for a year or so. And had a baby.

Then John got a Woodrow Wilson fellowship to Harvard. We thought that was fantastic. I mean, imagine, Harvard. And there we were with a tiny little baby and Woodrow Wilson, which was part support for the first year, and here we were in Cambridge, us from Pennsylavania and imagine that. It was the most incredible adventure you could possibly imagine. And I wanted to be part of that, I didn't want to just stay at home. I said, okay, what do you want to be, and I said, I want to be an archeologist (my interest having been sparked by a course) and I said okay, well where do you start? So I found a book in the library about the Irish Stone Age, the very beginnings of evidence of man in Ireland, and I took it home and I read the book. I looked at who wrote the book -- one of the advantages of being at Harvard is that the people who write the books are also on the faculty there --and, sure enough, he was on the faculty at Harvard. Next step: I'll go talk to him since I don't have money and I'm not a student. I'll ask him if I can audit his classes.

So I made my way into Peabody Museum up to the very top floor, down a long, dusty corridor back to this huge room with work tables, where he had his office, and I was terrified. I felt so insignificant in this museum and meeting this great man. He said, "Well, we can't just let in everyone off the street, audit classes, well, I don't know about that." And I said, "Well, I really want to be an archeologist." It was so embarrassing when I think about it, and he said, "Well, all right." So I bought myself a new notebook and a new pencil and arranged for babysitting and went to class on the first day. I felt like the most privileged person in the world to be participating in the life of Harvard University and to be in this wonderful classroom. I tried to understand what he was saying and took all kinds of notes in class, and at the end of class he looked way back up in the back row where I was, and he said, "Oh, Mrs.W. could I just see you for a few minutes?" My heart just dropped. I waited until everybody had left and then I went up and he said, "How would you like to be my research assistant? Of course you know that will mean going to France on an expedition this coming summer." I ran home and I said, "John, quick, sell the baby, I'm off to a new career." So I did become his research assistant. He just happened to be looking for a research assistant and somehow my coming in at just that right time struck him in just the right way. I worked as his laboratory assistant that whole year. I continued to audit courses. And there was no question about my not going to France. I called my mother and she agreed to take the baby for the summer. So he stayed with my parents for three months and John worked as a bartender in a resort for the summer and I was off on an expedition in south central France .

I worked very closely with my archeology professor and then did my master's degree in the anthropology department with a specialization in paleolithic archeology. My marriage fell apart at that point, and I just couldn't see how I was going to stay in school and support a child and myself; any kind of dissertation that I would write would involve field work in Africa or Southeast Asia probably. At that point there was just no way that I could have stayed. So I finished the master's degree and I just had to go to work.

It was like everybody else knew more than I knew and I had to do a lot of catching up; that's a long standing stance for me. That is still true today and probably always will be: that everybody knows more than I do and I just sort of have to blunder my way through or do a lot of really hard work. Being a graduate student at Harvard was very very hard work with no money and a small infant at home. I can remember that year. I would go to bed at seven o'clock in the evening when the baby went to bed and get up at midnight and study till dawn, til he woke up. It was the only way that I had time. The only way that I could get to class was to get a baby sitter for him, but since we had no money I had to trade babysitting, so for every hour that he was with somebody else, I had to take their kids. So it was a very hard year.

There are no jobs in archeology. Archeologists don't work, they teach at universities and go on expeditions . I mean I had to earn a living; I wasn't into a career at that point. I had to work. I worked for at least a year in Boston in social work and then movedto New York and I worked for maybe three years in social work in New York City . [After that, I came north and got the job at this community college.]

What do I do? I teach fifteen hours a week in the classroom. That's our standard load. Many people teach much more than that. I can't handle much more than that. I don't know how those folks do it. I do that and I prepare for those classes and follow up from the products of those classes, correct exams and papers and things like that. This year I do very little other than that. I was on sabbatical last year and I am having a very interesting experience this year, because I am disconnected from a lot of the governance and committee work that

I was heavily involved in before. It is one of the spin-offs of sabbaticals. So I feel very peripheral to all of the events. I am interested in a program that one of the other faculty members has developed this year for nontraditional studies, which would involve working with returning adult students . I have enjoyed working with adults and I think I probably am better at it than I am working with younger people. Adults are more interesting. And I find their reasons for coming back to school more compelling and appealing.

I do a lot of preparation for class. My courses are lecture courses rather than skill training of any sort. So it means that I have to stand up and talk. Despite the fact that I have taught some of these courses many many times, I'm always amazed that I never get bored with the material. I think that I am really very fortunate because I have heard other teachers say, "Oh, God, to teach this course again, so boring." I am never bored with the material and always have considerable levels of anxiety about am I going to say the truth, am I going to misrepresent the data.

I teach or have taught all of the psychology courses and all of the anthropology courses. I am the only person who teaches anthropology. We only offer two courses in anthropology. We offer several psychology courses. My preference, although I have taught all of them, my preference is to teach the big 101 courses, the big introductory psych that everybody takes. People take psych in droves because they think they are crazy and they want to find out what to do about it, or, secondly, they want power and control over themselves and other people, to make friends and influence people. That's not what they get from the course, obviously, so I want to try to deal with that in the presentation of all of that material. My contract with them is that they have some information; it's not a course for any kind of personal problem solving, I don't hold that out.

My course outlines are really contracts with students. The course outline says: this is where your sources of information will come from, your textbook or things in the library, and you are responsible for this; and this is what I will do, and this is my responsibility, and here's a schedule of when these events will take place. This is how I am going to compute your grade and this is what it will be based on. And I stick to that. And hold them to it. For many students on a 100 level, and even over that, it's a very new experience. Because they are used to being graded on whether they are good guys, whether they are nice people, whether they try hard. I'm interested in their energy and putting their energy into it. But I don't grade people for trying hard or being nice people. Or their attitude in class. It's the clearest and cleanest way that I can think of to do it and I am most comfortable with that and I will really work hard to help them do well in the only method of evaluation that seems to me to be honest in any way.

In the beginning it was very different. I didn't do things like take attendance in the beginning. I thought, you know, here we are dealing with grown-up people and either they show for classes or they don't. I kept getting myself backed into corners where I was making decisions about one student and not behaving in the same way with another student, or interpreting attitudes and allowing those perceived attitudes to influence my evaluation of their work. I just was increasingly uncomfortable with that and really needed to be clear that everybody was getting the same kind of treatment regardless of how I felt about them. In fact students need some help in honestly doing their work. Particularly young students are massively encouraged to copy the situation in high school by appearing to work really hard and then not knowing the difference between knowing the material and working hard.

In the fall semester it is so different from the spring semester, and it's with great trepidation that I walk into that big lecture hall which is just jammed with students, a lot of them just starting, just coming out of high school, although in a community college we have large mixtures of an adult population. The background lecture hall, which is a banked lecture hall, has these long-legged kids slouched down and they are like, "Ha ha, just try and get me interested in psych." Things change very dramatically after the first test, when many of the young students really do very very poorly, relying on those old magic techniques: if you simply open a textbook in front of you for a sufficient period of time the night before the test something will happen. When I talk to them about their experiences of studying in high school, in fact something like magic did happen: they passed. But they didn't learn anything. So when their not learning anything shows up on their first test with me, then I get all kinds of personal, "But you know, my car broke down," "I've been having a lot of problems," "Things are going badly at home for me," "I just lost my job," and "I was up all night long studying and I just don't understand why I didn't do well." And I used to feel a lot of pressure on me to soften that 62 that they just got. I am now just so comfortable not doing that, I just don't even pay any attention. I was uncomfortable when I would be pulled by that and I would say, "You know, that's really terrible, I'll see if I can arrange for you to take the test again," or whatever. And then there would be another student who wouldn't get that same kind of treatment, so I needed for me to be comfortable as a way of being with students that I'm sure everybody was getting the same kinds of breaks and the same kind of treatment.

A student came in to see me yesterday. She is an older student who is in my night class. She's thirty-nine years old, got six kids at home, an alcoholic husband, and she got a fifty-eight on the test. She also works. She gets up at five o'clock in the morning to do the laundry for those kids, keep everybody in clean clothes, and pack lunches, and get them off to school, and she studied all week long for the test and got a fifty-eight. My only understanding of that is that she didn't know the material and she knows that. We spent a long time talking about the way her life is right now and what other kinds of tasks she has and can we find a way to make her studying, the time that she does have to put in on it, more effective. Obviously it's not paying off for her. And I said, "I think it's not paying off because you don't know it. You think you know it, but you don't know it. If you did know it you would do better." The tests for those large classes are short answer, multiple choice, so it's either right or wrong. I'm not judging essay type of exams in that particular course, it would be impossible to do that. She felt that she had some new insights. All right, I am speaking for her and I don't know. I pay a lot of attention to her, I listen to her. We developed some concrete strategies for how she might improve her study behavior. I thought I could give her some support for her current life situation which I can clearly respond to, it's, you know, it's horrendous, it's terrible to try to go to school under such conditions. Also could reinforce her for the amount of time that she had spent on that test and say that's terrific let's find a way to make it pay off better next time. She's not going to be able to take the test over again, she didn't even ask me that, and I don't have trouble with students asking for that and denying that. We also talked about ways she might improve her study behavior . I spent a lot of time with her, so I think she felt my interest in her. She said, "I paid one hundred and fifteen dollars to take this course, I don't have that kind of money, I can't afford to flunk out." She said, "I am determined to get a degree, I want something different out of life. I never was a good student. I quit high school, I got pregnant before I left high school. In those days they kicked you out. I spent twenty years raising kids. I want something different out of life, and I am going to do it."

We got out her textbook and her class notes and we looked at what she was doing; and all kinds of mechanical work, memorizing definitions, was what she had been doing, in preparation for the test. She said, "My daughter said that wasn't going to pay off, I can see it didn't. My daughter said, 'That's not the right way,' but I didn't know what else to do, that's how they taught us in Catholic school, memorize definitions."And my suggestion was study with your textbook closed, read a section at a time and formulate a question about that, close your textbook on your thumb and then say, okay, what did I just read? She listened very intently and she said, "Never would have thought of trying that." I said, "When I ask a question in class, answer it, put your hand up, you never do that." And she said, "Well, I am embarrassed." I said, "You paid your money , get your money's worth. That's what I'm there for." And she laughed. She said she would try it. I don't know how well she will do with that, but we will see on the second test and I'll talk to her before that second test and see how she is doing. My sense is that the key is that they have to be able to say it outloud. I said, "You know, explain it to your daughter what classical conditioning is. Tell her, and if you can teach her then you know it. I learn more than anybody else because I have to stand up in front of all those people and explain it, so I read the chapters in a very different kind of way. If you imagine yourself in that kind of situation, if you had to do that, oh, yeah, it would be very different," So that's kind of the way I talk to them.

I have tried doing small groups stuff with them and I can get them to do it, with certain kinds of formats. I think students are prepared for a very passive activity in this kind of traditional educational setting; they want me to do something **to** them. And it's very hard to get them to take active responsibility for interacting with the material. And I guess I gave up on those big sections. I do that to a much greater degree in smaller classes that I teach. But even there it's very hard, and I get very badly discouraged because of the wide range of levels of enthusiasm in the classroom. Some students want very much to do that and who see class time as preparation time, for learning the material, who are attentive and enthusiastic about their learning if not the material itself, maybe they are that too. And other students are kind of laid back and are dozing and their lives are concerned with other issues at this point.

I have a small developmental psych course. This semester, on the first day of class, I talked about a new way of looking at the educational process instead of being a passive recipient of something that I am going to do to you. Isn't it a funny sort of economic exchange where they pay for something and I decide what they are going to get? I said, "What if we turn that around. It's like I decide what textbook you are going to read, I decide how much work you are going to do, I decide how it's going to be evaluated, I do it to you, when you are paying for it. How different that is from other kinds of economic transactions in which you engage, where you pay your money and you decide which one you are going to take and how you are going to take it." I said, "Also what happens is if I try to cheat you, you think that's terrific; if I cancel a class you say hurray, I have a day off. It's like buying a hot dog and trying not to eat it." And you know--"Wow, I never thought of it that way."

So what we did that first day of class was, I split them up into groups of two or three and everybody took a chapter and I said, "Go through that chapter in your small group and decide what you think is important, what you want to learn given your professional goals, your educational goals, what pieces of information, and write it down on newsprint and we will put it up on the wall and then I'll tell you if I think that there is something significant missing from that." And so they are sticking very very close to those kinds of learning objectives. They bought into them, they own them. So we contract for each class period. I don't know how to continually set up new and varied kinds of situations in which they will talk about and discuss the material. I feel them very heavy and dependent on me and I respond to that. They get discouraged and I feel like nothing has happened. We are going to do another set of learning objectives for the next unit and I'm already feeling that it's my energy and that I'm going to have to do it to them.

I'm a cheerleader. That's what I do here. Come on, gang, you can do it, I know you can, hurray, isn't that exciting, isn't this wonderful. Sometimes I don't have that kind of energy to pour into it. And when I do it works really well, I can get people on board, but I can't do that every class period. I try not to have my interest and enthusiasm drained by their passiveness. And sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Most of the time I can capture enough bright eyes in a small class or a large class to nourish my own energies. I mean that, it's amazing to me, this material is just incredible. It really is and I get very excited about it, and if I don't it's impossible for me to be there, I just can't. Part of my preparation is to be in touch with my own enthusiasm and excitement about the material. And if I can find in the classroom a couple of people who are also interested or enthusiastic, then I can work on the people who are trying not to be excited or enthusiastic about it, or who are passively sitting and waiting for me to do something. I feel very connected to students even in large classes. By the end of the semester, I know everybody's name. I work very hard at that so it's hard for them to disappear in class. I pay a lot of attention to them.

We used to teach just one anthropology course and I split it. Now I teach cultural and physical anthropology and archeology. But I pay for it with those large sections, so let's say I do my time. In that class of eight people there are four people that sit in the front and four people that sit in the back. The guys in the back, they are all young men, are there by mistake, they don't know anything about it, don't want to be there, just want three credits in anything; and the four people in the front row have had courses with me before and they are interested in it. So it's the opposite ends of the continuum. In that course we have talked about time. That course begins 5.5 million years ago. And that is a very long period of time. And I ask them to do a time line to scale. When it's time for them to bring their time lines in, we have to go out in the hallway and unroll them . I saw this guy sitting in the student lounge yesterday and he and his wife are both taking the course, and he said, "I am so excited about this, I can't believe this information. We did 10,000 years to the inch and we can't unroll it in the house." You can see light bulbs sort of opening up for him on that. He had never thought about that, always thought that human beings as we exist today are the finished product and that everything was leading up to where we are; the idea that we might be just a branch on a larger bush never occurred to him.

So that kind of enthusiasm and excitement is very nourishing for me and I don't need much of it.

I think it's really tragic [about those long-legged kids in the back row] because what they are bringing is their attitudes about education and learning from twelve years of experience with it. I mean that's what our system produces, that background of kids who say, "Go ahead, I dare you to teach me something." And that body posture says, "I'm going to try to get as far away from what's going on in the classroom as I possibly can." And what's different about college is that that's okay, if you want to do that, that's all right. Because I'm not going to chase you with letters to your mother, or you can drop out, you know, I don't have any obligation to hold you in school. And I feel very badly about that. I think that's really too bad.

A couple of years ago we had one with red hair, and he would absolutely never make eye contact with me, and you could just see him straight-arming me. I could feel that from him. We had the first exam, and he came into class with a baseball cap with a large brim on it and arranged himself very carefully. It was the first time that he was ever on time for class and it was clear that he had himself all set up to copy off somebody else's paper. He looked so silly. So I sat and I watched him copy off the smart young woman who sat sort of at a right angle from him. I told him how silly he looked and what a bad choice it really was to try not to study the material; first of all to pay for it, and to spend all the time there trying not to listen and trying not to learn . Why didn't he drop out? Was that really a possibility for him, not to come to school? And we had a really good talk. It was the first time that he ever looked at me, or said anything to me. It was clear that he put me in some kind of category which said "teacher" on it, somebody that you need to stay away from. He was here because he didn't really know what he was going to do. He couldn't find a job. He had a part-time job and had been laid off. He had no particular interest or passion for being here. And I said, "Well, what would happen if you dropped out?" Well, he didn't think anything bad would happen, he was kind of interested in a science course that he was taking. And I said, "If you are going to have to cheat to get through, I'm going to make you sit in the front row or I'll have to interrupt your cheating some way," and he did in fact flunk that test, and he dropped out. But every time I would pass him in the hallway he made eye contact with me and smiled. It was like we had shared something really important. I think he stayed in school for that one science course and I haven't seen him since that time, but it was like some kind of an honest transaction that I had with him.

I have to have everybody with me and I work very hard to keep them awake, to keep them paying attention. If I can't browbeat them, and intimidate them into paying attention to the material, I have to keep searching other kinds of ways to get them on board. And you can see one by one people either drop out or they'll come on board, in at least a minimal way. But somebody who continually averts their eyes, this is draining, it's like a battery that's being drained, I find it just exhausting and usually confront it in one way or another by helping the person to leave.

I guess when I use that word "help" I use it in a personal interactive way as different from techniques or skills that I might use that I will call teaching. Sometimes the assignment and the kinds of contracts I use are also helpful. I encouraged this boy to leave school, I gave him a lot of support for leaving, I helped him, I asked him to explore what would happen, the consequences of staying or going, opened up a possibility for him that he hadn't considered. I call it "help" when I really am arranging a situation so that I will feel a lot more comfortable with it. It is useful for me to get that boy out of the class. His behavior, something had to change. I also feel good about what I did with him. It dealt with the problem for me, it dealt with the problem as I experienced it, and I think he also began to deal with some of the issues that were current in his life in a different way.

I don't think the work that I do is very important. I mean, I think if learning is going to take place there is really very little that I can do about it. I try very hard to do within that arena what I can do, but it depends on who's out there in the audience, in the classroom. It is interesting, when I think about my own educational experiences here, it really doesn't fit. I don't need that kind of frantic activity and enthusiasm and energy. When I come back from class I am exhausted, just exhausted. And I never even knew that until the secretary said to me once, not just about myself but about other teachers, she said, "I watch you go to class and I see you have your books under your arms and everybody is looking bright and then I see you come back and everybody is really dragging." I don't think I influence or shape lives or am very significant in them. The most significant person in the educational process is the learner. And there is probably a bag of tricks that I can do that might help in some ways. What I do is, you know, in the scheme of things not terribly important.

In a number of classes this week, I've talked to the students about these interviews, and I am particularly disturbed at the contradiction that I myself stated between my teaching style and what I think learning is all about. I talked about that with the students in several classes this week and said, this is what I believe, and everybody is nodding because they recognize that I said the best way to learn is to say it out loud, and yet I come in here and lecture all the time, I'm the only one who talks. And I said, "I am stunned by that contradiction and what I believe and how I behave. And what do you think? What kinds of educational experiences have you had, I mean how do you learn, when you think of it." And those who talked said, "Well we like it when you talk, you can say things in a different way than what the textbook said and that's helpful to us. We understand it better." I said, "What do you think about you talking more?" "Well, we don't know what to say." What I realized was that students and teachers, myself and my students, are really so preprogrammed for that kind of set up that it's very difficult , given the expectations they have of what is going to happen in class, for them to move out of that, and it's equally hard for me to get out of those role expectations and to behave differently. I feel myself so caught in the expectation of that role and of how it should be, by my own experience, by the experience of the students, that when I feel their resistance to breaking out of those sets of expectations, that maybe reinforces my behaving in very traditional ways.

I have come increasingly to value my work as I've come to understand the difference and the uniqueness of community colleges and what they do offer for communities like this one or any community in which they are found, the kinds of flexibility that a community college has that a larger four-year university and college don't have. And the commitment to education that I feel community colleges have. I've come to like that. I think they are very radical kinds of ideas-- the very fact that it's an open admissions school. I love to see fifty-year old men walking around the hallways and eighteen-year-old boys and girls and retarded adults and just all manner of sizes and shapes and ages of people walking around the hallways . There is reading and writing skills for adults who never got them in the first twelve years of school or who dropped out and now want to come back, at minimal cost and supported by the tax dollars of people in the community. And I have been excited and pleased with the way in which this college has moved more and more into the community and has been responsive to the community needs. Often those moves come about because there is money in it and since the college has had to survive financially and develop a larger base, it's reached for new and nontraditional students. That kind of social progress and change often comes about because the dollars get short, but for whatever reason I like that idea, I like being in that environment, and I like the mixture of people that I have in my classes. A wide range of people with a wide range of experience from very young students out of high school, some of them there because they can't get jobs and don't know what else to do, some very bright ones who are there because we have a scholarship program. Housewives who think their brains are dead, who are coming back after fifteen years of raising kids. I'm impatient with younger students and less interested in them. I'm interested in the life experiences of the older people who are coming back, what it is they think about themselves, and how they see the world and their future that makes them want to come back to school. It's the life change that I'm interested in, it's moving in a new direction or going around another corner or daring to take that risk. And finding education as a means of doing that as a beginning.

There are many more women then men, at least in the courses that I teach. I think women respond to me differently then men do. A couple of years ago three guys in one of my evening classes were correctional officers coming back to take courses. Right from the very beginning they sat in the back row and I guessed they had to take this particular course. It was Marriage and Family. And for the first half-hour what I felt was--you know in comic books how they draw daggers coming out of characters' eyes--I could see these daggers coming from the back row and I didn't know what it was I said or did. It just continued throughout the whole semester and I could never get through that with them. I think what happens is that they were afraid that I was going to have some new radical psychological ideas about child-rearing or marriage and family. There are many instances where I've worked very successfully with older men who've come back. There are a couple that I have now, and there have been, over the years, older men who will come by and say, "Let's go have a cup of coffee and visit and I'll tell you what I'm doing now, I just finished my four-year degree," and, you know, keep touching base as do several of the women.

Older students are obviously at a change point, going off in a new direction and I find that those times in peoples' lives require great amounts of courage. I'm always impressed that people who had led traditional lives, sort of followed the same path, are, at some point in their life, able to pull themselves together and get the courage to move off into a new direction . I'm interested in that and impressed with them when they begin to make those first steps and also it's very gratifying to work with the excitement that they have as they are successful or as they are struggling in school. And finding themselves capable of doing things or reacting to school in a very new and different way. I mean, you can see light bulbs going on all over the room and it's just very gratifying for me. They are just much easier to teach. I get feedback from them much more clearly than from the younger students.

At the break in my psych class at night a woman stopped at the door who had been a student of mine five or six years ago. I said, "Do you remember when you first came to school, where you were?" She said, "I think about that so much, where I was and what I thought of myself, and I look at where I am now." She is working for the newspaper in town. She said, "I have changed so much and my whole sense of myself has changed so much. My husband is thinking of transferring to another city and he can get a better job there. I said to him, 'I'm not sure whether or not I want to do that because I have a job here.' I never would have said that before," and it's like she was at a point in her life when she dared to come back to school that made her open to all kinds of new ideas and new impressions. I think it's also clear that I serve as a model in some ways for students and I think it's probably I'm a clearer model for women then I am for men who are returning. And I am aware of the responsibility of that. I think that's also true for younger students, whether we like it or not. I think teachers in some ways are models. In a sense I am really exposing myself with students as I openly share my enthusiasm and excitement and ideas. The reward for me is to have someone share my excitement and enthusiasm, and older students are more likely to do that in my experience than younger students.

In the years when I started teaching at the college I thought, "Well, that's a good kind of part-time job, you get summers off and long vacations and that's for me." I gradually got pulled into it and became more involved with the school and year after year became more central in governance and in activity structure. I began to take it much more seriously, in fact my commitment just grew by leaps and bounds the longer that I taught here. So I was very involved. And at the same time recognized the foolishness of it all. People are into dividing the world into good guys and bad guys and it's just not that simple . I always felt that I had a capacity to put lots of energy into that, and good will and commitment, and at the same time back away from it. Perhaps the way in which we lived enabled me to do that. I spent a lot of time in Manhattan and we did a lot of traveling in the summer. Then we went on sabbatical and I developed some new interests and spent some time thinking about how it could be integrated back into my work here.

I have become interested in international development in third world issues, and I thought a useful way to spend my sabbatical would be to do some more learning about that. I worked for Oxfam for four months for the first semester. Then I was in Alaska for eight months, from January through the end of August, living in a tiny little Indian village in the eastern interior of Alaska. Had a community development project in the village. I was a Vista volunteer and so I worked on that community development project. A whole new shift in perspective; it is really quite dramatic for me. I see issues and I have new opinions and approaches that I didn't have before. I wanted some field experience in a situation in which there is an interface between a traditional native culture and the dominant western culture. It was just exactly what I wanted, and I was interested in bringing that back to the college. I am thinking about new ways to introduce that material into the college and I got back with all of my energy and enthusiasm. Now I didn't expect them to have a reception for me , but just half the people didn't even say hello, and I don't think they even realized that I had been gone. At some level that's okay, but what was not okay was my perception that, as a whole, the faculty had moved backwards as rapidly as they possible could in that time.

And so I'm feeling very isolated this year. One of the things that happens on sabbatical is you get unhooked from the committee structure so I don't serve on any committees this year. I'm not really part of the mainstream of what's going on and I'm really glad. I couldn't engage in that, I couldn't invest in it, it's not interesting to me. Nobody wants to change their own little method of doing anything, so that any proposal to change is killed. I think one of the major problems that we face, and one of the reasons we can't move ahead into new ideas like general education, is that there is an attempt on the part of faculty, and not a very conscious one, to reproduce a four-year college or university which had been their experience, that somehow they believe that their assigned work is to recreate their own experience. One of the ideas that I had come to see in the last several years at the community college is the way in which we want to duplicate that four-year experience or the four-year college or university and how inappropriate it is from where we are. People don't want to think about education or the process of learning or the process of teaching. Because they carry a label they assume that they know how to do it, and that is that, there is no dialogue. It's a myth, a four-year university. Terrible things go on in four-year universities, awful teaching. I mean dishonesty goes on in the classroom and how people deal with students, students get terribly ripped off, I was ripped off as a student. I got bad teaching, people cancelled classes and didn't make them up. But people want to recreate that, hang on to that, insist on that model, and there is sanctity in that and it's very difficult to move beyond that into any kind of new ideas.

I think we will always be offering a series of standard freshman and sophomore level courses, introductory level courses, the first two years of a four-year program. But the world is changing and the way in which that material gets organized has got to be thought through differently. We will still be offering these introductory level courses but the issues, the educational issues must be addressed , are being addressed in universities and must also be addressed here. I would enjoy the challenge of turning my material upside down and doing some new things. And I don't think that is possible here. I'm probably going to leave. I'm a tenured full professor and it's a wonderful job, but I don't think it's for me anymore. It's not feeling good to me there. And I don't want to be in a place where I beat on the system because it's not good enough for me or it doesn't suit me. The fact is that the word of my second husband's death just didn't spread, didn't move down the grapevine. If I tried to get a proposal through the curriculum committee,that would move down the grapevine, you know, but the news of his death didn't and so the people that I have worked with for eleven years just never said anything and it wasn't till months later that I realized they didn't know. Nobody said anything. I think it is symptomatic of the isolation and lack of involvement that the faculty have with each other. That there are certain kinds of routine ways of interacting that don't involve any piece of a person's soul and I also think it says something about their perception of me.

Not just leaving the college, it's leaving teaching, and I know that there are no other teaching jobs. And once you give it up that's it. So that's kind of scary. But my reason for leaving is in part because I'm not really happy here, but my not being happy is probably a function of other kinds of imperatives in my life. And that began back with my sabbatical. The question, how are you going to live your life, and how does one lead the moral life. The world is in terrible shape. We are going to blow ourselves to smithereens and we are going to exterminate humanity and six hundred million people are starving. It's terrible what's going on and I should worry about whether we can have general education at this college? I am feeling some deep urgent commitment and interest in working in international development. Dealing directly with some of those issues rather than the kind of indirect experience that I have with those issues in the classroom. My world view has changed, I think that somebody ought to do something about it and I'm in a good position to do that. I don't have small children, I am a healthy person and I can do a number of things. What I think I am talking about is my career and I'm probably going to have a career change. And I've had a number of very sharp career turns and somehow been at the right places at the right time to be able to do those and was able to put that together. I never felt that being a mother interfered with my career. It complicated it at a number of points but I never resented it nor did it ever feel that I had to say, well, when he is grown then I'll do this, I never felt that I was waiting for him to get on with his life or that I had to go out of my way in any way. There might have been a more stable or traditional way of organizing my life with him than what I did.

Nothing I think has been more influential in my life than my mother and her mother, my maternal grandmother, possibly my great grandmother in that line of women. My grandmother was an immigrant. She came when she was fifteen years old, and part of what she did was volunteer work in her community and my own mother for forty-one years has been a volunteer for the Red Cross, so the idea of volunteerism was that people in relatively privileged positions have an obligation, a duty, or a responsibility to share with others who are less fortunate. It's a very Puritan and a very straight bold-face imperative that comes from a long way back in my family. I see that tradition, that interests me very much. And I think that is a very strong issue for me. I would guess that I would probably not have stayed in archeology even if I had not left at that point where I had to leave. I would have a difficult time justifying archeology as a way of life. I think I want to and need to be doing some useful things. I'm now where I was when I started to teach, I wasn't into doing anything useful. But I certainly got into it, certainly did.

Profile

RICHARD YOUNG

(Richard Young, in his early forties, teaches Economics and Government at a New York State community college. He was interviewed in his office in the spring of 1982.)

I was born in New York City and I spent all my early years there till I went away to the army after school. My parents were both born in Jamaica. They both came to this country at an early age. My father worked for New York City's subway system as a machinist, my mother was a housewife all her life. Never worked outside the home. I grew up during the depression so things were a little tight, particularly in my neighborhood. I wasn't aware of being needy because my father did work throughout the time, but many others didn't. I was certainly aware of the fact that money was scarce. A large family, five children. I'm the middle one.

I grew up in Harlem and East Harlem and I moved at some point but it was only about two blocks away. When I was very young Harlem was my whole world so it just seemed a very normal place to grow up in. And life changed significantly during my youth. In the early years of my life it was clearly depression bound, and the later years it was basically war experience. Things changed a lot during the war. I can remember a great deal of unemployment when I was a kid. We were one of the few families who were not on welfare. People sitting around stoops with nothing to do. Pictures in the newspaper of people lining up for food. I remember food distribution centers in the neighborhood, hand-me-down clothing, cardboard in the soles of the shoes. Seldom any money to go to the movies or the pool and things like that. Go swimming in the river sometimes, the pools had free sessions in the morning--those were the times that I went. But there was never a time where you didn't have enough to eat or wear.

Jamaicans speak funny as far as young people are concerned and Jamaicans feel a sense of distinction I think. It was a cultural difference. Of course I'm not a Jamaican, I'm American, but I was aware of Jamaican friends. There is a different sort of identification that others don't always understand, sometimes interpret that as aloofness. Jamaicans were often accused of that, or the West Indians in Harlem. Jamaicans often have a leadership role in their community. There is an incredible disproportion in terms of leadership and that sometimes is resented. Having been born in this country, I didn't have any Jamaican accent.

I was fairly interested in school at an early age, but I really wasn't one of the best students. I didn't like school very much and somewhere in elementary school we took some standardized tests and apparently I did well and then people started to tell me that I was lazy and that I wasn't living up to my potential.

Later on I became more serious about school work and I read a lot. I can remember a real turning point, however. In junior high school there was one teacher who was very interested in progressive education and she made a real attempt to give us a different view of education. At some point she arranged for me to go to a private summer school, Horace Mann School, which I understand is pretty famous, and I went there and participated in all the activities that they had. And I had a math teacher who conducted a voluntary after-school math class; it was intended for people who wanted to get into schools that had entry exams. He said that our school simply didn't give you the math you needed. So I took that class and I did get into one of those schools. I was very embarrassed later on. I was going to summer school and the teachers were on strike and he was on the picket line. I felt very bad about crossing the picket line, but he encouraged me to cross anyway.

A lot of gang fighting took place and that could be pretty hairy in school. My best friend got shot in a gang fight and killed, just a few minutes after I talked to him . There was a lot of ethnic rivalry in the neighborhoods and there were fights between kids as well as adults, but mostly kid gangs. Italians, Irish, Puerto Rican, Black. It was more apparent than real. We had jackets and shirts and things like that but we weren't a serious gang. We were on the edge of a very large gang and that just about defused us because no way we could ever rival them, and yet we were close enough to be friends with them so we got a bit of protection . There were certain neighborhoods that you knew better than to go into. It was a little more likely that people would get beaten, or occasionally stabbed, but shooting was very rare.

I was a big reader, I would read a book every day or two. The public library books, take them home, stay in the library. That was nice. The library was open whenever you wanted. The hours were long, I liked the hours; now they have cut back so much. I remember moving from the children's department to the adult department and that opened up a lot of doors. That was a very good place to go and a congenial friendly place for me. I don't remember any librarians particularly, they were all good, all very helpful. They would all encourage any kid who was a regular customer. I might have been interested in the Nazis or frontier or American history or I would simply go in, look around at the various books, and perhaps sit down and read one. What I used to do was pick up a book or two that I thought I would like to skim and I would do that in the library, and then as soon as I saw a book that I thought that I wanted to take out, I would put that aside to take home with me. I'd go home and read it and I had a little bit of trouble with my parents at times reading by flashlight under the covers at night when I was supposed to be sleeping .

Somewhere I got a list of the world's best one hundred novels and I set out to read them all. I was about fourteen and I started to read newspapers at that point a great deal. I would read three or four newspapers a day. I'm still kind of a newshound. I think I get that from my father. That's basically how he spent his evening, listening to newscasts on the radio. And I read a great deal. I became interested in economics and politics and things like that. And just reading newspapers, the Times, the Herald Tribune, Post, I got interested in Hitler and the Nazis, I was also interested in American history and I was interested in politics. Howard Fast was one of my favorite authors .

In New York City there are four or five schools you have to take an exam to get into. Bronx Science is probably the most famous of them. They all have a rich curriculum. It's supposed to be college prep, or I guess they call it advanced placement in these days. Anyway I got into one and that's where I went to high school.

I started to work as soon as I went to high school— well, I had worked before that a lot but I was working at a regular business and I had a lot of time to read on the job. That's when I read the newspapers. We would sell magazine subscriptions. Liberty magazine had a bunch of kids signed up. Another big thing was selling shopping bags, you could buy them at wholesale. We used to deliver groceries and get a wagon and hang out in front of the supermarket and take the groceries home for the clients. My first regular job was in a hardware store . It was very close to my house and basically had delivery jobs . I got a job in a drug store again as a delivery boy. And that was in a wealthy neighborhood, East midtown Manhattan . I hadn't seen that kind of living before. At some point I worked at the automat. But when I started to go to high school I went to work in an office. I stayed there for a long time, even after I went to the college. When I was fairly young most people didn't walk to high school. There was only one high school in the neighborhood. That was considered an awful high school, and nobody wanted to go there. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't passed the test. I remember that no one passed any test who was not in that special math class. As I recall that teacher did it on his own without compensation, so you know we really owe him a debt of gratitude. When I got out of high school I didn't register for college at all. And my father had assumed that I would be going. The way that he put it was he would not have any bums in the family and he defined a bum as somebody who didn't go to college. So I went. I was an engineering major for three years; City College, CCNY.

One thing I was interested in was swimming. I used to practice on my own and that was the only activity I took part in. I was good at it. As a matter of fact I was sort of vaguely waiting for some sort of scholarship offer to college which never came. But they weren't giving scholarships in swimming in those days.

A lot of my getting out of the neighborhood had to do with church and going to camp and both of these became very important. Now I don't want to give the impression I was overly religious because I'm not, but I was active my teen years and early adulthood in church groups and I was very active in camp. Camp was a major passion in my life. And the church I would choose to go to sent their kids to camp and I would try to go to more than one camp. There were, at the time, quite a few agencies who sent children to camp. One of my major goals in life was to try to rig it so I could go to camp all summer. I remember my father picking me up and jumping in a cab and driving me quickly to a bus and I left for another camp and I didn't go home; he had a bag of clean laundry for me . And it had a lot to do with swimming because that was the only place that we could swim regularly. Camp was a marvelous experience. They weren't all good but you couldn't find out until you went there. I went to a Boys Club Camp, to PEO Camps, Settlement House Camps, Church camps, and soon as I discovered camp (I was about nine or ten) I started bugging my parents to sign me up . And generally speaking camps were free. Almost anybody who really wanted to go could go . Now my brother went and my sisters went but they weren't as interested. They would go for two weeks and that was enough. I tried to go all summer. I had a great time too. Swimming mostly. I liked singing, camp fires and bowling, nature study, almost anything, but mostly swimming. I went to this camp in upstate New York (that's how I got associated with the college initially) and that camp was run by the group who ran my church. I liked that one the best. Then I became a counselor and I worked in camps as a director until just eight or ten years ago. As with many integrated things it slowly became all Black and it's all Black now.

As a matter of fact a large part of the reason I became a teacher was so I could continue on to camp. I worked in camps twenty-three years, so I was well beyond the age most people give it up. A lot of fun, getting out of the neighborhood. I can recall being depressed when I came back. Frequently we came back by the New York Central Railroad and I could see my house and my neighborhood as we went by into Grand Central Station. I would just be maybe twenty-five yards from the tracks. And I would compare that with what it was like at the camp. It was dirty, ugly, and crowded, people hanging around with nothing to do, and camp was just so different. Clean swimming. Some of these camps were just not that well financed, they didn't have the staff to handle it. The good camps had all permanent staff. Camp was a very very important part of my life and a lot of the people that I met there were very influential. They were encouraging me to go to college and later still encouraged me to switch from engineering to education.

My family was fairly well known in our neighborhood simply for the fact that everyone was going to college. Now I really can't recall at that time more than one or two other people in our entire neighborhood going to college. I was at City College for three years. It was an exciting place to be with a lot of political activity and ferment going on and I was on the student government and I was on the swimming team. At that point I became quite political and I used to spend time going down to Union Square arguing with people and making up statistics the way they all do. I went to a large pretty-well-organized church and that was the time when things like tolerance and brotherhood were big things and we would have reciprocal visits with some of the main line white churches . And I was in the middle of it. I was part of the non-Communist left which meant that you would fight the right and the communists as well. There was some restaurant we were fighting. We went down there picketing and I was in the May Day parades at times, things like that. There were a lot of girls who were politically active. And a lot of people there whose life style was different--we call them hippies nowadays--but I didn't know anybody like that until I went to City College. If only I had been in the right curriculum, I would have really benefited from it.

Engineering was like a family tradition. What my father did was entitled "engineer" but it wasn't an engineering job. But he was always interested in that and my brother was an engineering major. And then at high school with its technical emphasis, it seemed as though everybody was going to be a doctor, or scientist, or engineer, or mathematician. You didn't hear of anyone talking about teaching history, I'm interested in poetry--everybody was an engineer. There is a kind of prestige attached to engineering, they are pretty snobbish. They would talk about the non-engineering physics as being a snap and non-engineering math as what the others take and they kind of want to run with the fast crowd.

I was one of the first ones drafted in the Korean War--one week after the first ones went. I was the right age, no family, that sort of thing. During the war I spent all my time in Georgia. Now there you are well aware of segregation. I was in a segregated outfit that was used as the spearhead for integration quite a lot. We moved around a lot as a group, to integrate other units. They has us in a train, in a segregated unit, and we got to Atlanta. It was the first time I ate in the Black dining room and it was clearly inferior and the food--they gave me grits the first time in my life and a lot of us said, "What's that?" I saw incidents. Once when I was waiting for a bus with a lot of other Black soldiers. A car pulled up with several white guys in it and one of them asked for directions. It seemed to me that he was intentially garbling his words; it was a little game that we used to play and I was aware of that. So I backed down and some other guy went over and bent over to hear better and he hit him on the head with an empty bottle, cut his head badly, and sped off. Soon after that a police car pulled up while they were still in sight. We tried to tell them what happened, and they simply questioned us while the people were getting further and further away. Once I was taking a train home and I got on the wrong train--I used to frequently go and try to sleep in the lounge, rather than try to sleep sitting up in the chair ...and I had left my seat including my luggage and I went to another car and I slept there. Only to be awakened in the middle of the night and told that my car had been cut off from the train and the rest of the train was headed for New York and I was in North Carolina. So they told me I had better go over to the station agent and see what could be done. I walked in full of innocence and leaned over his desk and told him what had happened. He looked me up and down and said, "Listen, boy, get your hand off my desk and say 'sir' when you speak to a white man." What did I do? I got off of his desk and I stood up and I said "sir" and that pleased him and he arranged my transportation home. I would associate with a lot of whites that were on the base and they would not pull anything like that on the base. You hear a lot of stories about trumped up charges and all that sort of thing. I had an incident in upstate New York. I walked in to get a haircut and they looked at me in a suspicious, incredulous manner and I went into two shops and one said that you needed an appointment first. I went into the next one and he said he was just about to close.

I didn't like the army. I found the army more onerous than the South. I found the army absolutely and totally objectionable and when I got out I tried to form an anti-army veterans group. I spent several hundred dollars of my own money, I got nowhere. Stupidity from top to bottom, callousness, inefficiency, inhumanity; I was deeply offended by the whole thing. They make you howl blood and guts and when you are tired you are supposed to say, "I'm not tired," and when you want to stop you are supposed to say no, you don't want to stop. I was known as "the big, wise college kid from New York." When I got out I just didn't go back and I didn't do anything for two years or so.

I was working in an office and I had been given some very low level supervisory work, very low. Then I took advantage of my GI bill; they had a vocational counseling service as one of your veterans' benefits. I went to an agency, I remember it was the Jewish Welfare Agency, and they put me through a really good battery of tests and interviews. And then they told me it indicated that I should be an engineer! I said, "Well, what second?" And they said, "Teaching," and I said, "Fine." I got hold of an almanac and looked up the teachers' colleges in the state. I got hold of an atlas and I found out where they were located and I wrote to the one closest to New York, never having heard of the school and knowing absolutely nothing about it. Just applied and I started going there and I wasn't there very long before I took my first economics course and there I found that while I wasn't that good in math and engineering, I had more than enough math for economics and not only that, it was easy. It was simple and I could not understand why people couldn't understand what they were talking about. And I thought that would be an excellent field to go into . I finished with a degree in elementary ed but I immediately went on and got my master's.

After the army I decided to get serious about going to school. I took the aptitude tests and vocational counseling and I picked education. And I went to a small upstate university. It was different, it was easier. It was a lot of fun. I enjoyed the campus life. I was a big man on campus, it wasn't that big a campus. I was the editor of the paper. I joined a fraternity. I got good grades. I was officially an education major but I knew at that point I would go on in economics. I had two different experiences in student teaching . One time I prepared a lesson plan and I included three films and my cooperating teacher said, "Oh, no, you don't want these three films." I said, "Oh, why not?" "No, " he said, "What you need is one film, one film strip, and one slide presentation, then you will have 'a variety of educational media.'" Sure enough, when the teacher came from the school he complimented me for using a variety of educational media. This teacher just seemed to understand the way things were. He had a lot of faith in me, put me in charge of the class almost immediately. I was teaching junior high school, social science. At that point I knew that I would be going to graduate school for economics. My economics teacher at college was a labor economist. He had gone to Cornell and he was very influential. I applied to a lot of schools for graduate work because I needed some scholarship help. All the better ones accepted me. I won a Danforth scholarship and that would pay for all graduate work so I could have gone anywhere . I went to Cornell. It was a little bit of a shock, a heavy reading load. I soon found out that I couldn't attend every lecture . It was a nice life. I think that's when I decided that I wouldn't go back to New York City.

It's very difficult to get a job in labor. Most of us applied for jobs as we left and only one that I know of got it. Just as I was leaving the placement office at college, they had word of a need for somebody to work in a research project at a state univeristy, so I applied for the job and I got it, largely on the strength of writing ability. It was a large project and half way through they found that they had a lot of people who were good researchers but not too many people could write. So I was brought in basically as a writer which is what I did for the half year. There was some possibility of my staying there working on it afterwards but I decided against it. Then I entered graduate school. I was certain that I would go right on and get a doctorate. After I was there a while I saw some of the doctoral candidates under a lot of pressure and it was chancy--some would never get it and I didn't know whether I had the will and the ability . When I came here to the community college, almost everybody was ostensibly at least working on their doctorate. I began to note that very few of them actually got it. And so I never did seriously pursue it. I was a little disillusioned when I was at the state university at the faculty's attitude towards teaching. It was clear that they considered the teaching secondary and the only people who taught were those who couldn't get grants. And I remember I pulled a real faux pas once at a faculty meeting, I just blurted out suddenly, "Doesn't anybody here like to teach?" And they all looked at me embarrassed and I realized that's the sort of thing that you don't say . I didn't know anything about community colleges at that point, but I began to hear about that's where teaching takes place . I began to hear that you didn't necessarily have to have a doctorate . Up to that point I had assumed that I could get a job somewhere and work on my doctorate.

Then the community college came along as an institution that would satisfy my interests and not require this heavy investment of time and effort. I was still going to camp in those days and that took up my summers . I actually heard about this community college from a wife of a music teacher and the music teacher was teaching here at the time and she tried to interest me when I was graduating. I submitted an application but then the state university job came along . So the application was still pending and active for the following fall and I came down and interviewed for it. There were two openings and there were two other candidates both of whom eventually were hired before me. Both of whom had credentials far superior to mine. They didn't have doctorates, but one had a degree from Oxford and the other had a master's degree but he had five years of teaching experience. I had interviewed for some other jobs and I ran into some very obvious discrimination. In one college they had insisted that I show up at a time when I really couldn't be spared from my research project, and they pushed so hard that they let me go for one day. When I got there the attitude changed, totally and completely. I could see the president peeking out of the door and I could see the impact . Some secretary went running in as if she had seen a ghost . They kept me waiting a long time and then most of the interview consisted of their asking me how I thought I would like the community, a small upstate town, and explaining to me why I wouldn't. I knew that I wouldn't get the job and the other one that I went to they were even more obvious. They basically told me that I wouldn't fit in. They said, "Who would you talk to?" I said, "Well, I talk to whites," and they seemed surprised at that. That college president turned out to be a classmate of my economics teacher and I told him about it and he called him up and raised hell. The community college where I was hired was geographically perfect.

I teach principles of economics. It's the basic economics course. Until last year, actually, I spent a lot of time teaching a combination of economics and government. The other course I teach is consumer economics, and I started that course in the early 1960's when there were very few of them in the country. It's required for commercial art students and that gives me a lot of enrollment . Most commercial art students go into advertising and I think the art department chairman at the time thought they ought to hear the other side of the story before they go out in the world and I think it is a very wise choice. When I started the course, it was seen by the dean who gave permission to start it as a course for the terminal students. It was not supposed to be too rigorous. Now I wasn't too happy with that description, so we negotiated and it was agreed that it might be a combination of the relevant parts of economic principles and some concrete how to shop, how to buy, information. And that's what it is now, a hybrid course, basically: the market system, sociological, psychological influences on buying; ceremonial consumption; credit ; funerals, weddings, gift-giving and that sort of thing;credit; advertising; pricing system; budgeting.

[As a teacher]I think I explain things well. I think I am fairly logical--that's what they all make fun of me here in this department. They say I have an obsession with logic. And I think I explain things clearly without a lot of jargon . I do lecture a lot. Students say much too much, much too fast, and many of them bring tape recorders and they write a lot, they take a lot of notes. I think I would like more discussion but it's not always worth the time it takes, a lot of nonsense gets said and you have to constantly pull them back on track. I think the longer that you teach the more you add and you are reluctant to take anything out. As a result you end up having more and more to say all the time. I do encourage discussion. I give extra credit for it. Each class seems to have a personality. Sometimes the personality is just to sit there and take notes and other times they have the right combination of people who speak up. Usually if there is a lot of talking it's often because there are some older woman students in the class and they tend not to be afraid to talk up and they express themselves. I always like to have them in class. By older I don't necessarily mean elderly but maybe beyond the normal student age; that could be as young as late twenties or early thirties. But they are not shy and reserved. They speak up and they are a real asset to the class usually. I don't give that many A's. I don't really think I'm a hard marker. I give all essay tests and that's pretty rare these days. And students are not used to it and they don't like it. And some of them for very good reason, because they can't write. The reason that I stick to it is because I think you can test concepts a lot better with essays than you can with multiple choice exams. Essay tests take a lot of time to grade and sometimes I take a long time to hand the papers back, which I'm not awfully proud of.

There is a very wide range of students here including some people who clearly don't have the language skills to work effectively and probably a lot of them don't have a lot of motivation. Some of them have serious educational liabilities, primarily language, they just don't write well or read well. They don't understand what you are saying. On the other hand some of them are great students, particularly in the Principles of Economics class. I remember a few years ago I was reading an announcement about the dean's list and then I said, "I better not bother reading the list because nobody here is dean's list," and they said, "What do you mean?" So I asked them seriously, "Who's on the dean's list?" There was about two-thirds of the class. It stunned me. I mean I knew they were pretty good but I didn't know they were that good. I'd give a test and I'd say, "This curve was too high;" they'd say, "No, we are all smart." So the economics classes have been superior students by and large. I had a girl last year, amazingly good; she was valedictorian in her high school. I used to use her papers to grade the test. She wrote a better answer than I could. One of my ex-students who worked with me at camp went on to a big university to get his doctorate and the last I heard he was the assistant to the president at that university. But the other impression I have about our students is basically they are very decent human beings. They are just well behaved, considerate, nice to work with. The campus is exceptionally clean because they take pride in the campus. When we go on a field trip I don't have to warn them to behave or anything. I just turn them loose and invariably someone will come to me and say this is the nicest group that we have had.

Every teacher here has a list of advisees and we see them regularly. I talk to them about what they are planning to do. I talk to them about their work time, whether the job is interfering. I try to get them interested in campus activities. That doesn't work too well though. I spend a lot of time talking about their classwork with them, how well they are doing, how to study, things like that. I guess the biggest thing though is program making. I just make the best possible program for them, so they take the courses in the right sequence and have a decent schedule during the day. I had an advisee come to me, an older woman who had a child, and she was trying to make up a schedule and she couldn't get it to fit in because she had to be home at eight o'clock and she had to be back home by three, but she could come at all the hours between nine and three. I found, to my amazement, that there were only about three sequences that fit entirely within that time frame. Knowing our previous dean, it's not so strange when you think about it. He had a notion that anyone who didn't commit himself totally and fully to going to school was not going to succeed anyway and therefore he had intentionally created the old schedule so that it forced you to be here at wide-ranging times. And it was totally unnecessary. I sat down with a board and made up some movable pieces to see whether any other schedule could be arranged. It turned out that almost any other schedule would be better, even one chosen at random. I knew that if I simply proposed it all the interests would shoot it down. Things like, "We have schedules printed already in the old form." So instead I started to pass rumors and as soon as the students heard that a better schedule was possible the student senate jumped on it, the part-time student association which was made up of these older women grabbed it, and I knew that they would not let it go. And then, finally, the faculty group appointed a committee to study it and the committee adopted this new schedule. That may be my best contribution ever to this school. Now I'm trying to do the same thing with regard to our final exam schedule .

Most of us recognize older, woman students as serious, good students. And most of us try to get them if we can. We have a program called New Horizons. That is designed specifically to bring women back to campus and there is some counseling, there are some courses in which they are concentrated so they will feel more at home. We put a big emphasis on that. I guess all colleges now are receiving what they call the nontraditional student. And these women make up a good part of that. They are serious. They are good additions to every class. I had an older woman auditing my Consumer Economics class this year. She was wonderful. We have a policy where senior citizens can audit for free and several of them take advantage of that. It's just refreshing to have someone who has had some experiences and who isn't afraid to speak up about it and they are good students. They prepare, they study, they usually write well, express themselves well.

Now what else do I do here? I'm on committees. This is the least enjoyable part of the job. I'm on the Academic Standing Committee. It's the committee that determines who gets put on probation, who gets dismissed, and it reviews all of the graduation credentials. Now that takes two days twice a year and nobody wants to do that. I like it because it keeps you off of some of the other committees that I like even less. I'm not one of those who always says, "Let's give him another chance." We never dismiss someone entirely, they are always free to come back in the evening session or part-time, and if they get two C's they are back in. So it's not a permanent thing but sometimes that's the jolt that is needed. We are dealing with how many credits you can take in a summer. And again, I'm a hard liner. I want to limit the number of credits you can take. I go to sleep during department meetings. I seldom say anything. I do that intentionally. I just desire to drop out of the whole area of faculty governance. We never discuss anything that is significant. I'm known for a lot of statements in our department one of which is "Why are we discussing how to before we have discussed whether to?"

It's the liberal arts students that take more advanced social science courses. And our liberal arts enrollment dropped from over fifty percent to somewhere around twenty-five percent. It's a question of numbers, I don't take it personally. We just have eight people interested in comparative politics, eight people that are interested in European history, eight people interested in labor relations, and that's not enough to teach any one of those. We have to accept the fact that we don't have that many students. And it'll come back, it's coming back now. I guess maybe the reason I take such a tolerant attitude is because it really hasn't affected me that much. Economics is required. The enrollment of economics didn't go for a few years and all of a sudden, unexpectedly, there was enough this semester; and we are going to try labor relations again.

I can't dictate what I would like to do here. I have to do what needs to be done. I'm teaching a lot of the things that I like. Now some of the people in my department were justifiably annoyed and frustrated. Our work load has just been increased in the last contract. Now we teach five courses every semester and I think there must be more of a chance that I will be teaching three preparations. I have never taught four and some people have.

In the summer we run a large swimming program in the county and I'm in charge of that. There are a lot of camps and pools around and I have that whole responsibility . They needed someone who would have some availability in the summer, the fellow who had done it for thirty-five years was retiring. I was just about ready to stop working at camp at the time. We were always encouraged to take part in community activity . They suddenly presented this water-safety chairmanship to me and I thought, that's a wonderful way . I took it and I enjoy it. I run the program pretty much as I please and I do a lot but I don't spend any time talking and fussing and arguing and that sort of thing. I like to work with the kids. I meet a lot of nice people and it's basically older high-school people and college-age people involved in it and a sprinkling of people beyond that. That's where I was last night, running an instructor course .

What's it like to be a Black faculty member? I don't see much reaction. I've heard, at times, that some students don't identify me as Black. At other times, obviously, students are aware. They do ask questions. I don't meet any apparent hostility. I have had some conflict with administration. They were putting a whole lot of pressure on me to go to school and to continue graduate work. I was not very interested in doing it, mostly because I was at camp all summer. Finally I started to take a course every summer while at camp and they continued to put pressure on me to take more . They would put it in my evaluations. They would call me in and tell me I'm not taking enough work. At the appropriate time it looked as though I would be promoted, but the president called me, instead, and said he would not promote me because of the paucity of graduate work, and he said that that was the only issue. And I chose not to take them. I'm stubborn. I don't need the money.

What's it like to be a single male in a married society? You are somewhat of an exception but that doesn't make much difference on campus. I have my own circle of friends, a couple in the English department, some in the phys ed department. I see a lot of the Black students and there are several Jamaican students here, so I tend to gather some of them. We have some African students and they come to see me a lot, too.

Marking papers is my biggest problem. That's a real task and it bothers me, I hate to do it, but I have to do it all the time. I go to great lengths to get out of meetings. But I don't skip them. I'm too noticeable, there is always someone who notices if I'm not there. But there are quite a few people who just don't bother going. I don't dare do that. I don't sense a great deal of power, I do sense a fair amount of freedom and flexibility. I think it's a good place to work. I'm very happy that I came here. My department, I think, is the best in the school, the best one to work in certainly. I have a choice of schedules to a large extent. I really would dislike eight o'clocks and I don't get any. In return, of course, I get a lot of four o'clocks. We get choice of textbooks, method of instruction, method of testing. So I am reasonably happy with that. I've gone to other places and I hear about having to submit exams to the department chairman and not having a choice of textbooks and being told how much to lecture and how much to have discussion and that sort of thing, and we have nothing like that. I think it's a good institution,and every time I go to a conference and talk to other faculty it reinforces it. Now as I think about it I sound like a Pollyanna, like I'm just tickled pink with everything here, and that's not how I feel all the time.

I tell my mother I'm a teacher and she doesn't seem interested in any details. I think "professor" is pretentious. I avoid using it. There are people who carefully use it. I'm just the opposite. I think maybe I picked up that attitude at the state college. Don't use these pretentious titles, it's bad form. What is impressive? Well, people that are humane, empathetic, concerned, warm; people who are intelligent and clear thinking. I can remember one time at camp we were talking about single-word definitions and the word that I came up with that was important was "kindness." I used to have a lot of respect for people who were very very intelligent, but the older I got the less important I think that is. There are some intelligent people that don't have any sense. I just like to do a good job at what I'm doing. I'm having some trouble with the Red Cross now; they have some management seminars and management by objectives and they are trying to put me into that mold now. I may have to put up with that sort of thing here, but not when I'm a volunteer. It's the kind of thing that I like to do and it keeps me from a lot of other pressures. People are always saying would you like to be on this board or that board or some other group and I can always say, "No, I'm much too busy with the Red Cross."

I like to control things. I like to control what I do and I certainly don't want anybody controlling me. There was that phrase that Lorraine Hansberry used in Raisin in the Sun --an "exhausted insurgent." That's me. I'm an exhausted insurgent and I've had it. How did I get that way? Age. As you get older you don't have as much energy after awhile. And you don't think that it's worth fighting for. I look for things that are relatively peaceful. I think of myself as having been a student activist and one of those on campus who is pushing for an organization and after a while I just stopped. I think it's something that I chose rather than the clock just stopped. A lot of the things that we fought for were accomplished. When the institution was young and new, a lot of things we figured we would get done, and some of them worked out and some didn't. The institution is a lot bigger now, it's much harder to get things done. How could you sustain that level of intensity if, in fact, you find that it is not being productive, or that it seems so difficult to do and doesn't seem likely to be successful? That's why mostly the insurgents are younger people and I don't know whether it is because they have more energy or they haven't been disillusioned or what. I had a feeling that we needed faculty governance here, that the decisions were all made by the administration; and at one time I thought we ought to have a rankless college, no faculty rank at all. Control by the people who are doing the work on the firing line. Presumably they have a better idea of what's going on. I guess it wasn't that important.

I think the power structure in community colleges is not exactly the same as in the four-year college and yet comparisons are always being made. Everyone doesn't necessarily see us as bona fide faculty. Well, he is just a community college teacher and he is different and he is not really among the educational elite. He's not research-oriented, probably, and the students are not as good, and they see us as a kind of a half-way step between high school and real colleges. And sometimes we hear that phrase, it's not a real college. It's just a community college. I think a lot of our work situation represents that position, in terms of work load, in terms of pay perhaps, although I don't think our pay is really inferior, but in terms of support services; for instance, we really don't have as much secretarial help as we might have. Our department is virtually unique as I understand it in giving us any secretarial help at all. We still get sent to conferences with the bill paid by the school. I went to an economics convention in San Francisco and I met a teacher from a nearby prestigious four-year school and he was really surprised to see me there. He asked me how much of it did they pay, and I said, "They paid it all, of course," and he said his college doesn't pay it all.

There are significant differences. It would be foolish to try and pretend that they don't exist. You don't get a chance to teach on a very advanced level, many of the students are not as good as you would hope, and that affects the nature of your teaching. The work load is heavier, you have less time to spend on other things, research, reading. Certainly the public doesn't perceive you in quite the same way. For instance some of the politicians have been talking about the budget; they'll indicate that this is not a college like a nearby prestigious four-year school , you don't have doctorates here, so why do you deserve as much pay as you get? Why do you need the kind of support services you get? Sometimes we hear ourselves referred to as a thirteenth grade.

I was talking to a girl last night in swimming class about where she is going when she gets out of high school and she didn't know that I taught here. I asked her if she had given any thought to the community college. She said, "Oh no, that's just like high school." Then she was embarrassed when she found out that I did teach here, she said "Oops." I don't think we're at the academic level of Vassar. I think we are at the academic level of the local Catholic college. Not an elite institution but we never set out to be. But we are doing the job we were set up to do.

It's a little bit of a blow to your ego. It's as if I worked in a restaurant that wasn't a five-star restaurant and someone said this is not a first-class restaurant. That doesn't mean that it's a bad restaurant. It's just not structured at that level. I can remember when I came here I taught my first course in principles of economics. I taught it basically the way I taught it at graduate school. This is something that we talk about among ourselves quite a lot. Whether we "water things down," that's the way it is usually put, and then the whole problem of grading inflation. I don't think anyone could consistently teach without regard for the level of the students. There is just no way you can continue to talk as if all of the nuances and subtleties were being picked up by students. I don't like to use the term "watered down," but I do certainly think that the subject matter has been adjusted, a crazy euphemism, but it has been adjusted . One of the things that I tell my advisees is never to take a teacher who is teaching here for the first time. For a very good reason. They tend to be very very severe, very strict, they perhaps have not adjusted to what a community college is all about. It may be the same way in a four-year university at this level. Many teachers come directly out of graduate school where they have been eating, sleeping, breathing that one subject for two years or more and they just have forgotten what students are like who don't necessarily care that much about that subject. I recognize, when I mark an exam paper, most of them are not going to be written very well. Some of them are not as good as you would hope. They don't necessarily catch the concepts . They are long on examples and short on principles. Some of the better students are just as good as any student would be anywhere and when they leave here they do well.

We call ourselves a comprehensive community college which means that it is supposed to serve a variety of purposes. And it's supposed to be able to serve people who have a limited ability and still be meaningful and appropriate for those who have more ability. Now that fellow that I told you about that became the assistant to the president in Wisconsin, his record was incredible . He was thrown out of high school. When he came here he was on academic probation and then he did a little better and by the time he graduated he was president of the student body and he had a 3.5 average. And then he went to Bucknell, I think, and there he was magna cum laude and he went on to get his doctorate in a short time . I had another student who was my advisee who flunked out of here, went into the Air Force, came back four years later and got virtually straight A's. So I realize that the level of performance at any one point does not necessarily fix it for all time.

Hopefully I will be a catalyst for some more serious application, some change in their life . One of the rewards here is that we see people who show a little promise initially and by the time they leave they are quite different. Some of the girls that come in want to be a secretary . And before long they switch to the business curriculum and now they are thinking in terms of becoming a part of management. When you have a really lively class, a lot of discussion, a lot of interest, high level of energy, now that's a kind of reward too. Or if you give an exam and the exam seems to show that they really caught the notion that you were trying to teach. That's rewarding. Some students I keep in touch with long after they leave here. They come around to talk. I taught one course at a nearby liberal arts college, I student taught in high school, I was a teaching assistant at Cornell, and they weren't as nice. On this campus there is a kind of a mutual respect and I get a lot of this when our students come back after they have gone somewhere else. And they say, "I really didn't appreciate what we had here." There is a different feeling, there is a kind of a community feeling here. I do like our students. They would be absolutely perfect if they were a little better prepared, but that's not as important as being nice people.

At the liberal arts college the person that normally taught that labor relations course was on sabbatical so I did it for that one semester. It was challenging. They were sharp and bright and it was a good experience. They were clearly better students, very obvious difference. We have students here that are every bit as good as they are but we don't have a whole class of them. Now that's one of the challenges in the community college, the range of ability . It's very great and there are times when you are making a point and you can see someone saying, well of course that's obvious, and someone else is looking blank. You have to choose your vocabulary. I think that our students have the most trouble with abstraction. Sometimes they seem very motivated, other times they say "I don't care about that." The word "challenge" comes to mind, but it's also just plain difficult. That's the only thing that makes teaching here less than fully satisfying.

My brother teaches six hours a week and he clearly has more time to do other things. At Howard, economics. We were teaching twelve and fifteen, now we are teaching fifteen. That goes with the territory. I know exactly what is expected of us here and what the work load is likely to be and it's just a fact of life. I never seriously thought of reducing the work load; I know that that's totally impossible. I would like to have smaller classes but at the community college level twelve would be exceptional. It's like going to work and getting upset because you have to work forty hours in a factory--well, that's the hours in the factory and if you work in a factory you know that.

I certainly enjoy teaching. It's a question of what subject and what level. I was offered a job at the four-year level but it was clear that the doctorate came along with it and there is simply no point going there and then having to leave. We have a lot of faculty here who are refugees from four-year schools for just that reason.

Commentary

If we were to choose one profile to present an overview of the complexities of teaching in community colleges, it might well be that of Samuel Berger. His family background, his own experience in community colleges as a student, his predisposition to working with the type of students who attend community colleges, his long and successful career in community colleges primarily as a teacher, at times as an administrator, and always as an intellectual, lead us to give special weight to his experience and his understanding of that experience in the community colleges .

In his thirty-two years of working in the community college system in the city in which he grew up, Berger faced almost all the issues reflected in earlier chapters of this report. He not only faced them, in many ways he understood the sources of the conflicts, committed his energy to solving them, and understood the degree to which he could resolve and not resolve the issues. For example, in the area of pedagogy, Berger, like other participants, was faced with the complexity of testing, grading, and standards in the community college. He started out his career with the notion that students either did the work up to a certain standard or they didn't. If they did not, that was their responsibility (much as Nancy Warren stated). He soon learned that a rigid adherence to standards, without a concomitant commitment to working with students to construct or reconstruct their skills so that they have a chance to meet those standards, was a way of getting rid of the problem but not solving it. Nowhere in his profile does he talk about adjusting standards. He maintains an expectation of excellence and he works with his students to obtain it. He eschews objective tests because he knows that they offer no real learning experience and do not help a person learn to think.

Berger faced the fact that many of his students were deficient in basic language skills. But his instincts and experience were sound enough to know that the issue was not his students' competence, but rather what they had been or had not been taught up to that point. He was willing to sit down with students and figure out what they could and could not do, and tutor accordingly. He knew from his experience that poor people were as seriously interested in ideas and learning as anyone else. He had a deep respect for his students and for the potential of a community college to serve them. He was not concerned by the low status of the community college and the fact that it was at the bottom of the totem pole in higher education. He knew that at the core there should be no difference between the type of teacher in the community college and in the university. He faced and rejected the notion that a community college teacher should baby and spoon-feed students. He knew the difference between working with students to develop their independent skills and understanding, and helping them in a way that would make them dependent. He felt a deep sadness over the waste of minds, and he knew that many of the students with whom he worked might not make it out of the circumstances of poverty into which they were born. But he did not allow that knowledge to undermine his confidence in himself and in what he was doing.

Well before the eighties he recognized the significance of community colleges to Blacks. He urged the chancellor of his community college system to forge an alliance with the Black community that would ultimately be mutually advantageous to the Blacks and the community college system. When he found from his experience in the central administration that leadership of the community colleges was dominated by short-run political concerns and dollars, he gave up trying to change the system from a position of administrative power and happily returned to teaching.

His teaching and administrative experience led him to see the narrowness of vision prevalent in career education. He confronted the callousness that was reflected in the establishment of vocational programs which were unresponsive to the basic social and intellectual needs of the Black community but were still promulgated because there were dollars to support the programs.

He did not take a holier-than-thou attitude about vocational programs. He well understood that four-year colleges and universities have long been involved in vocational education. His complaint was at the injustice of the types and level of vocational education allocated to the community college sector. He saw the impotence of vocational programs that trained people in a narrow set of skills rather than educating them about the history and social context of the job they were being prepared to carry out. He argued for a more complete conception of vocational education that linked the humanities and vocational training in a way that anticipated the most current thinking on the subject (Cohen and Brawer 1982, p. 89).

He was not overwhelmed by the heavy teaching load of fifteen to twenty hours that he had in the early years, nor was he particularly dismayed by the fact that the courses he would teach would all be introductory. He learned how to teach through such intensive experience, and learned a great deal about related social science disciplines because he had to develop courses in them. He was at the center of a department that displayed at one point an unusual amount of intellectual vigor. He worked through his efforts in the teachers' union to upgrade the pay and working conditions of community college teachers. He did not reflect a sense of being undermined by those conditions .

Throughout his thirty-two years in the community college he maintained an active commitment to his work. Finally there was one tension that he could not resolve which, in combination with whatever other personal reasons he had, made him finally leave community college teaching and make the move to a university--a move which, according to his interview, he originally thought about doing in 1954.

What he could not finally resolve or adjust to was his realization that there was something profoundly wrong with the community college. The realization came to a head when working with his colleagues in a reconceptualization of the entire social science curriculum. Talking through basic ideas that could be incorporated, he noticed two of his younger colleagues asleep. He said, "That was a fateful day for me because I put away that outline and we never did anything with it ." He realized, in that moment, that he was working with colleagues who were not as interested in ideas as he was. That realization reinforced his sense of isolation as a researcher in the community college. Although he is quick to point out that he has seen plenty of examples of anti- intellectualism in universities, he, unlike many of the other participants we interviewed, applauds the pressure universities put on faculty to do research and write because he believes that they are activities of the mind that reinforce each other.

That this tension caused by his recognition of and confrontation with the anti-intellectualism of the community college had such serious repercussions for Berger is because his notion of the intellectual world is not separate from the world of action. For him the intellectual life is related to changing the world, to making a more just and free society. His work is basically intellectual work; his contribution to the movement toward that more just society is his research, his writing, and his attitude about basic human problems. When he finally faced the fact that the whole system was infused with an anti-intellectual ethos which led to a disposition to avoid thinking situations through and to encourage taking the easy way out, he decided that he would leave the community college and seek a setting in which he could do his intellectual work with integrity. He could always deal with the reality of imperfection in the community college. At times that imperfection pained him deeply, especially when he saw, for example, capable people channeled into careers and jobs unsuited to their capabilities.

Neither status, nor work load, nor introductory courses, nor students deficient in basic skills were enough in themselves to make Berger leave the community college system. What finally led to his leaving was his confrontation with an institutionalized anti-intellectualism. He recognized that the students who go to community colleges need a very good school. He saw that they were not getting it. In his fairness, he added, "They are not getting enough of it anyway." The key to the community college's becoming a good-enough school is a structure that encourages an attitude of mind and a predisposition to thoughtfulness and learning, a commitment to seeking new knowledge which is connected to moving toward a more just society, and a commitment to intellectual activity as Berger defines it. The painful fact is that the history and structure of community colleges reflect a fundamental ambivalence toward that ideal of intellectual work. In separating research from teaching the founders of community colleges set in motion a string of consequences that keep the intellectual and the anti-intellectual in constant tension in the community college. For a faculty member committed to the traditional ethos implicit in the social sciences, that tension takes an enormous toll.

Lawrence Bauer experiences that same tension even though he started his teaching in a community college twenty-six years after Berger. Bauer came to community college teaching as a second career following service in the ministry. Bauer's community college is in a setting quite different from Berger's large urban environment. Berger's student body was predominantly minority, at least in the later years. Bauer's student body is predominantly white. Despite the differences in time, geography, and institutional characteristics, Bauer's experience as a social science teacher echoes Berger's.

In addition to teaching in the regular program at the community college, Bauer teaches in an outreach program in a nearby state prison. His teaching in the prison provides a sharp contrast to his teaching experience at the college. For Bauer, his students in the prison, students who would be called the social problems with which Bauer's course deals, are excited, motivated, eager to learn, interested in ideas, respectful of his efforts. They thirst for contact with the outside world and with what they can learn from Bauer.

The contrast between the attitude of his students in the prison and at the college provides a sort of culture shock for Bauer. He comes from a course in the prison where he can hardly get a word in edgewise to a classroom of students at the college whom he perceives as apathetic and resentful of his efforts to have them think about notions basic to the development of social consciousness. Bauer's understanding of this apathy and resentment is somewhat ambivalent when compared to Berger's understanding. There is an element in Bauer of blaming the students and at the same time recognizing the larger issues involved. He sees the college promoting a vision of training for jobs that results in students being unable to see the connection between understanding issues in their social context and preparing for the work they intend to do. Like Berger, Bauer decries the split between career education and the liberal arts. He is deeply concerned that in emphasizing training over education, students separate their mind from their work. He adds a level of complexity to his understanding when he speculates that perhaps the social issues course presents his students with issues with which they cannot contend.

Students who pursue training programs in community colleges are increasingly less wealthy, have had less educational success, than students who go to four-year colleges. Students in a community college reflect the social problems of the country. They are playing the game of trying to succeed by the rules. The rules say that to get anywhere they have to learn skills that will get them a job. Increasingly those skills are becoming more and more associated with technological training. Their interest is in getting the training that will get them the job they will need to make a living. It is complicated for them to go to a two-year institution that promotes this short-term approach to education and, at the same time, be confronted by a professor who asks them to step back and deal with long-run social issues.

The college's social science course, which is required of all students in all programs, results in the largest course of its kind in the nation. On the surface it seems like a reasonable attempt on the college's part to make sure that their students in training programs have some perspective on the social context of their experience. But to cram a way of thinking and the diverse range of subjects covered in the social sciences into one course may contribute to isolating the social science perspective, minimizing it, and making it into something that has to be endured rather than a significant part of the fabric of the student's education. In criticizing the students for not seeing the relationship between liberal arts courses and the jobs they are preparing for in the computer industry, Bauer is criticizing the "victim" of an educational structure rather than the structure itself.

Like Berger, Bauer has a commitment to reading, research, and writing. He started his Ph.D. program at the age of forty. Since his days in divinity school he held enormous respect for those who went on for their doctorates, and he sought a doctorate out of a drive to learn, a respect for the degree, and a hope that it would lead to a position in a four-year college. When the last did not materialize Bauer had to confront the ambiguity of holding a doctorate in the community college. While the administration seemed to place great stock in its faculty doing graduate work and facilitated Bauer's pursuit of his degree, the college does not see its faculty as "professors." Professors do their job with students best by preparing for their teaching, doing research, writing , going as deeply into their field as it is possible to do and sharing that depth with their students. The working conditions of a professor in four-year colleges and universities are structured to a greater or lesser degree around that vision. The community colleges, on the other hand, do not envision their faculty in those terms. They see the work of faculty as teaching, working with students individually, and serving on committees. They write conditions of these aspects of the job into contracts. They do not build into their notion of work Bauer's notion that in order to teach well he must read, do research, and write in his field. Bauer's colleagues look at him as somewhat odd because he spends so much time reading .

When Bauer left the ministry, he hoped to become a professor. Instead, as a member of the faculty of a community college, he finds himself in a world somewhere between that of a high school teacher and a college professor. While issues of status are not unimportant to him, he seems more genuinely concerned with the implications of that ambiguous status for his students' learning. He knows, as Berger did, that at the core of a teacher's work, no matter what level or what kinds of students he or she may be teaching, is intellectual work. The ambiguous stance community colleges take towards intellectual work, and the pressure he feels to retire early so that the college would be able to hire someone younger than he at a considerable savings in salary, lead to Bauer's feeling trapped in his work. At the same time he is determined to struggle to hang on to it. The implications for Bauer, as a person and teacher, and the implications for his college and his students of working while feeling trapped, are difficult to predict or to measure; but it would be more difficult to say that they do not exist.

Apparently, Judith Wesley does not feel trapped in her job in the community college. She began her interview with us talking about "her great good luck" at being a teacher in the community college at which she worked. Near the end of the third and final interview with her, she shared with us her intent to give up her position at the community college. There is a great deal at work in her personal life that informs and probably accounts for her thinking about leaving. At the same time her experience as a community college teacher is not totally irrelevant to that decision.

Judith Wesley presents perhaps the most concrete detail of the complexities of teaching in a community college. She told of how, at the beginning of her teaching experience, she felt considerable pressure to take into consideration students' personal problems when she was evaluating them. While not unsympathetic , she realized the inequities involved in trying to meet those individual student needs. She developed a contract system with her students that would clearly set out the expectations they had to fulfill in order to pass her course and also outlined her role and what her students could expect of her. She was trying to confront an attitude she perceived that her students picked up in high school: that they would be passed if they were nice people and tried to do the work.

Like many community college faculty she has an interest in and attachment to older returning students. Her story of how she worked with a mother of six whose husband was an alcoholic is concrete evidence of the way community college teachers must cut through whatever their sympathies might be for the personal contexts of their students' lives and find a way to work with them that will result in their learning. She knew that the key to her older woman student's learning was that she study in such a way that she be able to explain the material. And she knew that, as a teacher, she learned more than anybody else because she had to stand up in front of her classes and explain the material to her students. She knew that it was important for her students to take an active, responsible position in her classes, and she was deeply bothered by the inconsistency between what she knew about teaching and learning and her own reflection on how she taught, a concern which developed during the course of the interview. Even during the course of the three weeks over which we interviewed her, she spoke to her classes about the issue and tried to get them to take a more active stance in her classes. But with the exception of a few in each of her classes with whom she connects in her enthusiasm for the material, she is faced with a considerable passivity on the part of her students.

Sometimes that passivity is tinged with resentment. Her discussion of the boys who sit at the back of her classroom with their legs stretched out and a scowl on their faces which almost dares the teacher to teach them, is not unlike Cynthia Jamison's description of the hostility faced in her classroom. In one of the most interesting discussions of a key word that appeared in many participants' interviews, Wesley analysed her use of the word "help" after she used it in the context of "helping" one of those teach-me-if-you-dare students to leave her class. She realized that she used the word "help" when describing efforts on her part in working with students to make things more comfortable for herself. The incisiveness and honesty of her analysis of her use of the word "help" and the pedagogy of "helping" which can be inferred from her analysis stand out for us as one of the most interesting sequences of the entire interviewing process.

Like Cynthia Jamison, she has to teach large sections of introductory psychology in order to be able to justify teaching the smaller sections of anthropology and archeology . She talks about being a "cheerleader" in those classes and how draining that mode of teaching is to her. She comes back from her classes exhausted and knows on the basis of her own experience that significant learning can not depend on that sort of frenetic activity on her part.

She loves the diversity of students to whom her community college caters. She sees herself as a potential model for older students, especially older women trying to develop an active and independent life. She also has a healthy skepticism of the four-year colleges and universities as a model for what her college should be. She knows that the structure of four-year schools does not guarantee integrity in the way teaching and learning is carried on. She looks to the community college to develop its own model of a significant education process.

She recently took a sabbatical and worked part of the time with Oxfam and part of the time she did field work in a remote Alaskan village. On her return to the college she hoped that she would be able to incorporate what she had learned on her sabbatical, but she was struck by how "unhooked" she was to the college and how isolated she was from her colleagues. Not active in the committee system politics, she felt cut off from her colleagues and somewhat critical of their unwillingness to entertain changes. When her husband died, her life and her colleagues' lives were so separate that they said nothing about her loss for four months after his death .

She had come to the realization that although she would love to reconceptualize her material and turn her approach upside down, working with her colleagues to address some basic issues, that that would not happen. Change was too difficult. She is thinking of giving up her full-professor, tenured position because she does not want to stay in a setting that she is starting to find too much fault with.

She ends her interview responding to the questions of what her work means to her saying that she is dissatisfied with her work and she is going to give it up and try something radically different, a step she has taken before in her life. She feels a deep commitment to making a direct contribution to ameliorating what she perceives as the world's most pressing social problem. She now sees her deep intellectual interest in archeology as frivolous: "Fascinating but not terribly useful." Like her grandmother and her mother before her, she contemplates a return to the tradition of direct human service. Her thinking of leaving the community college is a very complicated affair, one not easily attributable to any one set of factors. Her family background, her college and university experience, her gender and responsibilities as a mother, her marriages, divorce, her widowhood, her relationships with her father and her mother all played a role in her coming to the community college and in her forming her intent to leave. Certainly her experience as a teacher in the college also played a significant role in that decision. After leaving graduate school in archeology she became a social worker. Immediately prior to her joining the community college faculty she worked in a detention facility for young women. Now after some years in the community college she is questioning the worth and satisfaction of her work in the community college. Her sabbatical has opened up to her new possibilities .

Richard Young is aware of every issue raised in the profiles of Berger, Bauer, and Wesley, but unlike the other three he has resolved the issues in his mind and accepts his job for what it is. He recognizes the significant differences between teaching in a community college and teaching in a four-year school: no advanced courses, students whose performance makes them appear less capable, heavier work load, less support from politicians who see community college teachers as teaching thirteenth and fourteenth grade rather than teaching college. He accepts that the perceptions students have of the school in which he teaches is not high and he admits to his ego being hurt a little by that. He acknowledges the reality of what he calls the "adjustment" of subject matter to the level of his students. He sees that as similar to adjustment that all schools do, whether they are four-year or two- year schools. However, at this point in his career he is not bothered by those realities. He knows what the territory is and he accepts it. He does not expect a lighter work load; he understands the assumptions that led to the work load he has and he takes it as a fact of life. What sustains his equanimity?

He likes and respects his students. He sees them as decent human beings. No matter what level of performance they bring to his classroom, he seems to have a genuine respect for them and enjoys their respect for him . He knows that although he calls some of his students "bright" that they are all capable of achieving that level of performance given the right circumstances. He takes pleasure in good discussions, in the satisfaction of participating in some spectacular success stories, and in some less spectacular changes in aspirations among the students with whom he has worked. He stays in touch with his students. He might wish they were "brighter" but he would rather work with them than some of the competitive and aggressive students he has occasionally taught in an elite private four-year school. He has discussed these issues with his colleagues and they agree that their college is a great place to teach if only the students were a little better.

Young makes the contribution that he can make and does not agitate himself any more about the failings of the institution. He concentrates on what is positive, minds his own business, cultivates his friendships and does his work. He once spent a great deal of energy trying to change things in the college. He no longer tries. He has offered a great deal to society through his volunteer work with the Red Cross summer swimming programs. He does not feel that he owes more than he offers. He once tried to change things. He, like Jesus Lopez, deeply resented the absurdities of the army and he even tried to form a group of veterans against the army. Early in his career in the community college he was very active in trying to encourage faculty governance on the model he saw when he was a research assistant at a state college. Those efforts came to very little . He calls himself an"exhausted insurgent."

In not trying anymore to change things on a broad scale, who is to say that he is not doing good work for the individual students he teaches? He has resolved the tensions that he had with his work and enjoys the autonomy that he now has. Having made a decision not to seek the doctorate in his field, he is making the best of who he is and what his community college tries to do. Perhaps any work setting demands such an adjustment .

But for an institution committed to combating social injustices that are reflected in our educational system, such an adjustment as Young had to make is disquieting.

Section Three:

The Work of Career Education Faculty

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Preface

The faculty in community colleges, like faculty in other colleges and in universities, are divided among those who teach liberal arts courses and those who teach courses designed primarily to prepare students for jobs. From the inception of the community college, liberal arts programs were considered collegiate and leading to transfer to four-year colleges; career education programs were considered "terminal" and leading directly to jobs.

Both functions were envisioned by the earliest advocates and administrators of community colleges. Despite the persistent urgings of many community college leaders and the American Association of Junior Colleges, the majority of students who enrolled in junior colleges from the early 1900s to the mid 1960s entertained hopes of a collegiate education with a four-year degree and they enrolled in programs leading to those goals. Students entering community colleges today may nurse deep within their hearts a wish for a four-year degree, but despite what may not be a change in their aspirations, the majority are now enrolling in career programs. A similar shift from liberal arts to career programs has also occurred in universities. Hurn (1982) and Cohen and Brawer (1982, pp.191-222) have provided excellent summaries of the history of career education in community colleges, outlining the difficulties the movement experienced in the colleges in the first half of this century and the reasons for the decided shift to career education in community colleges from the mid-sixties to the present.

As dramatic as the shift has been, as decisive as the difference between terminal programs and liberal arts programs may appear, and as deep as the division may be among the faculty themselves, the stories of community college faculty who teach in career programs touch on many of the same themes as the stories of those in the liberal arts which we presented in Section Two of this report. The stories in this section also highlight characteristics of the work of career faculty which are unique to them and which stem from the nature of the occupation for which they prepare students. Finally, there are some ironies in the way career education faculty carry out their work which challenge the dichotomies that have been allowed to develop between liberal arts and career education tracks and between notions of training and notions of education. That the challenge can be found in the way some career education faculty carry out and understand their work is a sign that those dichotomies are unnecessarily rigid and divisive .

In chapter seven we present the profiles of three faculty who teach in secretarial and business programs in three different community colleges, one in New York State and two in Massachusetts. Chapter eight presents two profiles of faculty who teach in nursing programs, one in Massachusetts and one in California, and a vignette of a faculty member who teaches in a dental hygiene program in Massachusetts. Despite the range in geography, the stories of these three health-field faculty overlap in many areas and illustrate the power of the occupational field and the effect of the status of the field on the work of faculty in the community colleges. Chapter nine, the final chapter in this section, presents the profiles of three men who teach in technological programs at different levels of the occupational hierarchy in three different community colleges in New York State and California. Illustrated in these profiles are the complexities of the interaction of technological programs with the sciences and math and with conventional notions of the relationship of intelligence to jobs that involve manual labor. Community college dichotomies are thus seen as reflections of long-standing divisions in the larger society.

Chapter VII

Nine to Five in the Community College:

The Work of Secretarial and Business Faculty

Introduction to the Profiles

The faculty in community colleges, like the faculty in universities, may be divided among those who teach liberal arts courses and those who teach courses designed to prepare students for jobs. From the inception of the community college, liberal arts programs were considered as leading to transfer to four-year colleges, and career education programs were considered "terminal" and leading directly to jobs.

Both functions were envisioned by the earliest advocates and administrators of community colleges. Despite the persistent urgings of many community college leaders and the American Association of Junior Colleges, the majority of students who enrolled from the early 1900s to the mid 1960s entertained hopes of a collegiate education leading to a four- year degree and enrolled in programs leading to those goals. The majority of those entering community colleges today may nurse in their hearts a wish for a four- year degree, but despite what may not be any change in their aspirations, the majority of students in community colleges are now enrolling in career programs. A similar shift from liberal arts to career programs has also occurred in four- year universities (Hurn 1982). Cohen and Brawer (1982, pp. 191-222) have provided an excellent summary of the history of career education in community colleges, the difficulties the movement experienced in the colleges in the first half of this century, and the reasons for the decided shift toward career education which the community colleges underwent from the mid-sixties to the present.

As dramatic as the shift has been, and as clear as the difference between terminal programs and liberal arts programs may appear, the stories of community college faculty who teach in career programs touch on many of the same themes as stories of those in the liberal arts, which we presented in earlier chapters. Their stories also highlight some characteristics of the work of career faculty which are unique to them and which stem from the nature of the occupation for which they prepare students. Finally, dichotomies have developed between notions of the liberal arts and notions of career education. The way some career education faculty carry out and understand their work is a sign that those dichotomies are unnecessarily rigid and divisive of students and faculty .

In this chapter we present the profiles of three faculty who teach in secretarial and business programs in three different community colleges, one in New York State and two in Massachusetts. Their stories illustrate the interaction of power and opportunity with gender, race, class, and status in the occupational hierarchy.

Profile

LINDA DONOVAN

(Linda Donovan, a woman in her thirties, teaches business and secretarial subjects at a community college in New York State. She was interviewed twice in her office and once at her home in the fall of 1981.)

I grew up in a rather unusual situation. My brother and sister were ten and twelve years older than I was so I had all the advantages of an only child, but none of the disadvantages. If my parents were not available to do anything, my brother and sister always were.

My father came here from Italy when he was thirteen and did not speak any English at all and didn't do very well in American school systems . He just couldn't read the questions, couldn't deal with society as it was, and so we spent most of our life growing up in what would be considered a lower economic area. My parents had a great deal of drive--tremendously ambitious--everything was done, you know, to perfection. I feel that I probably did a lot better in school because I was among older children a lot.

My father still works. He's a barber. I think that my father did extremely well based on the roadblocks that he had to overcome --always on the bottom, kind of struggling to reach the top. He was also involved in a lot of politics over the years and again kept at a low level because of his lack of education. He really couldn't hold too many responsible political positions because he couldn't speak very well. A shrewd man, extremely ambitious, and definitely a man who you would want working for you if you had to be organizing any political campaign. Terrific supporting individual, totally loyal, and very very hard working. His father had come to the city I think five years before he was able to send for the rest of the family. They were a family of six who all arrived together in the early 1900's--about 1915. It staggers me when I think of a mother of five kids left in Italy to raise the children on her own, and then sailing across the Atlantic with these children, among whom was my dad.

At the time I was growing up there was a social stigma attached to the old-world influence. Unfortunately I never learned Italian in my home, because my parents tried to downplay any of the old world influences. My brother and sister both speak Italian fluently but I can't speak at all. We didn't live in an Italian ghetto. We lived more in what would have been characterized as an Irish ghetto. My father's father gave him a house next door to him. Generally, Italian families tend to cluster together near the patriarch. My background was a little bit different because the Irish people didn't move there because their parents were there; they moved there because they wanted to. I never considered living in the same community when I married, but my sister did. She felt that she really wanted to stay by my parents.

My first recollection of going into the barber shop was as a teenager. After school we used to have a hangout down in the city where all the kids would go and have cokes and you know, just pile ten into a booth that sat four, and talk after school, fool around. It was down the street from where my dad's shop was so I made it a regular practice to stop in there because I knew if I stopped in my dad would immediately head for his pocket and give me some money to spend. He was always very generous with my friends too. Money was not a problem. But my parents just didn't have the same kinds of materialistic drives that I have. It seems that once you acquire one thing you're struggling for another. It didn't matter to them whether they had the very latest car as long as their car ran. Their house was always the cleanest and shiniest in the neighborhood, and all of our furniture was in good shape, but it didn't have to be new or the best antiques--the kinds of standards that I see my friends have. I really have to laugh when I see the limited income that my dad makes and he can see his way clear to giving each of the nine grandchildren five dollars every week.

I went to parochial school. The public school in the area was considered for the "have nots." We were considered to be the lucky crew to go to parochial school. I'm really not so convinced that happened to be the case. I think my parents probably got ripped off through most of my academic career because they always paid a premium for me to be sent to parochial schools when in fact we had sixty in a class and we never had physical education , never had art, never had music, never had any of the frills that a lot of my peers grew up with. And at this stage in my life I realized that I did have some talent. My parents were not interested in the arts at all. Nobody in our community was particularly interested in art or in crafts. As a matter of fact it was probably downplayed because crafts meant you had to make your own clothes because you couldn't afford to buy whatever was on the market. I didn't realize that I had any talent in terms of athletic ability because I spent most of my life playing with dolls and getting boys to set the table for me and play house with me. I just didn't play too much of their sports. But when I did become involved in physical education at college, I went bananas. I discovered athletics and just loved it, absolutely loved it. I began to play tennis. You have to remember that I went from zero to being able to play, you know, a pretty good competitive game with people who had played tennis.

I played a lot of tennis and got involved in archery. I started skiing, did some sailing, bicycling, hiking, and backpacking.

I was always kind of singled out to work with the teachers, to do the special little activities. "Would you like to stay after school to work on this project?" Making things for the elderly people in the homes and bringing them to them. Dolls, loved to play dolls. I liked math. I remember being very very strong in spelling. We had our little spelling bees. The math would probably have been my strongest. I liked to be dramatic. I kind of liked to organize people's lives and I think that I could do that through these dolls. We had a very lovely summer house, my grandparents' summer place. We used to go into the woods and pick all our flowers and come back onto the porch and set up a little house. I would make the kids eat these godawful concoctions, things that we had picked in the woods, the apples, the berries .

I took Latin for four years in high school. We had to have what was called a major, some area of concentration. I selected Latin because I did so well in Latin. I didn't really enjoy it but I didn't dislike it either. Some teacher somewhere said you ought to just continue in Latin rather than getting involved in these pansy languages like French or German, and I was very easily influenced. I did not have any one at home whose advice I could seek on these issues.

I was in an academic curriculum. I was encouraged to enroll in the college program when I was on the elementary school level. I had won a scholarship to our local high school. When I was in the eighth grade, my teacher said that she really felt that I should go into the college programs and then if I chose to, later on, I could take business courses as extras. There were two options, college or business. I didn't have any strong feelings for either one at that point. Probably if she had said, "Why don't you go into the business option, you would probably be very good at it," I would have elected the business option. Because I didn't really have any guidance at home; my parents didn't seem to really care or want to direct me in any way. I don't think they thought of me as being college bound. They were grateful for any success. They've never had any long-term goals for me. We never discussed what you were going to be when you grew up.

The way I saw it, as a child, I had four options as a female attending parochial school; I could be a nun, which I immediately discounted, wasn't interested in that at all. I could be a nurse--wasn't interested in being a nurse because I really never reacted well in emergency situations, didn't like the sight of blood. Secretary may have been the other choice, and I didn't have any negative feelings towards being a secretary. Any secretaries I knew were probably okay people. Living in this circle that I was in, that may have been a role that some of the mothers had taken on. But basically most of the mothers did not work. They were all housewives, including my own, including my grandparents. Then the last choice was a teacher. I felt that all women who did well in school could probably have that option and of course there were some things that made it attractive, like time off.

I never really thought of myself in terms of a career. I probably went to college because I didn't want to work. A lot of my friends were going to college so I kind of got caught up in their enthusiasm. I think my teachers encouraged me to investigate some college, but it was kind of half-hearted. I didn't really know what I wanted. I chose business education because being a teacher seemed like one of the more attractive roles and I did well in business, so it seemed like a natural combination. Part of the problem was being one of sixty kids in a class. Guidance was nonexistent, you know. You only saw a guidance counselor if you weren't doing well, if you had some problem. I didn't have any problems so I didn't know that maybe I ought to see a guidance counselor because I needed some direction on where my life was going. I listened well, I was able to memorize easily, I had a lot of skills that are necessary for academic success. I hated Shakespeare, wasn't interested at all, but I got my A's in English Lit because I followed the prescribed pattern. It wasn't because I had any particular strengths in that area.

It was the only Catholic high school in the city so it was drawing from a tremendous mixture. I did see it as a shortcoming, as an elementary school child, to be Italian in an Irish community. I had to do better than everyone else in order to prove myself because I was constantly being put down by the Irish children in the community. I felt that I really had to apologize for being Italian and show that I was very worthwhile in spite of it.

I wanted to go away to college but my parents discouraged it because I was very young. I was probably a year and a half younger than most of my peers were. My birthday is at the end of January and my parents and the school system pushed me ahead into first grade when I was four. By the time I was at a level where I was interested in going to college my parents still considered me a baby--not only because of my age but having a brother and sister so much older. They bribed me. They said that if I went to a school in my home town they would buy me a nice new car and naturally I elected to stay at home. It was really a lot of fun but I think that I missed out on college life, college friendships as well, because of living at home. I felt very segmented from the college community and didn't participate in a lot of things .

After my freshman year in college. I went to work that summer in a bank. I worked with a lot of people who had been close to me in school and had worked in the bank for a couple of years, and I kind of looked at their roles in life in terms of what they would be ten years from now. And I saw some very disturbing things. I felt that they really didn't have any opportunities to grow at all professionally in that setting; that probably ten years from now they would be like the other women who were already working in this bank for the past ten years, and wouldn't really have anything exciting, any challenge, in their career. And I felt that really wasn't what I wanted . I wanted to be able to experience some growth and I'd rather enjoy being in the upper part of any hierarchy rather than, you know, at the lower, let's say, secretarial or clerical level. Anyway, after my first year of working, I went back to school with a very different attitude toward school, what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go, and started doing extremely well and really enjoyed my entire college experience from that point, at least on an academic level.

I had a very narrow look on what the rest of the world was like in terms of their beliefs. I really thought that Protestants all were very bad people, that I should be leery of them; they were dishonest, unkind, ruthless, and Jewish people were the same. I was a little intimidated by a total Jewish environment that I found myself immersed in at college, where there was a high proportion of Jewish girls from New York City who went to the school and I was afraid of developing relationships with them. I had never met a Protestant person in my life until I was seventeen years old. I was a little intimidated and I also wondered if I was going to be able to measure up to their standards. I, for the first time in my life, discovered that my family was not wealthy. A terrific vacation by our standards might have been a trip to Ocean City, New Jersey. All of a sudden I was immersed in an environment where these kids were talking about this trip to Paris and Europe and the Bahamas and the Caribbean--places that I had never even considered going, let alone had the opportunity to go. So I was a little bit overwhelmed and I felt these kids grew up in country clubs. We felt we had advantages because we had a summer house and we could get out of the city during the summer.

Graduation was important to me because it represented a unique situation. I wasn't like everyone else. I had gotten married in my junior year, had a baby in my senior year, and did my student teaching in the local high school, overcoming a lot of difficulty. It wasn't easy to be up all night with a crying infant and then go into school and teach for four or five hours straight. I was tired and I found it was a lot of work and not so much fun as it may have been for a lot of my peers who were doing their student teaching. They could go home after the day was over and discuss with their group of girls--you know, a dormitory setting--any problems they had had. Or just spend five uninterrupted hours working on their lesson plans for the next day. I didn't have that luxury. I went home to a child who was rather demanding, and you know, I would be sitting at the typewriter with this little baby bouncing on my knee and I had a very strong sense of responsibility and a very strong sense of not failing and proving to the world, especially to my parents, who had a fit when I told them that I was going to be married, that in spite of any drawbacks I could overcome it. So graduation for me was definitely a milestone, and I did graduate with honors in business. It wasn't just getting by. I had done a good job and I felt very good about the fact that I had done a good job.

I did a very good job in my student teaching as well. As a matter of fact that's how I came to get the job at the community college. I did my student teaching in the high school. I became very friendly with the chairman of the department and I guess he kind of liked my style. He came in, he saw a number of classes and must have gotten some good reports from the students as well as from my supervisors, so after graduating I was invited to teach a course at the college. He knew that I had a young child and was probably only interested in working on a part-time basis. So they had a job in their business division, teaching typewriting to the retailing majors. This was ten hours a week. He asked me if I was interested in the position. I was very flattered by his invitation. He indicated that if things went well I might be able to increase my teaching load if there was more demand. I discussed the situation with my husband and my parents who were very averse to my working at all. I mean, after all I was a mother. I had neglected my son long enough to finish my education. I certainly should not consider neglecting him even further by teaching an entire ten hours a week. My husband wasn't enthusiastic about my being a career person at all, but the fact of the matter was we needed the money.

I wound up being invited to be a member of the faculty here at the community college. For a while I was teaching on a part-time basis at my college and here in the evening division as well. Teaching at the community college in the evenings, in the years that my children were babies, was a positive experience not only for myself but for my family as well. Because I found that my husband and children developed a very strong bond with each other. I worked part-time. Whatever courses happened to be available they asked me to teach. The first year that my second son went to school all day, full-time days, change started occurring. In the faculty here they needed a full-time business teacher and they had been pleased with what I was doing in the evening division. So I was invited to become a part of the faculty.

It was really dramatic to go from part-time to full-time. Most of the faculty with whom I had direct contact were not very conscientious. They generally had an attitude that it wasn't all that important to teach these courses. When I came to teach in the day school I found that in the secretarial department the teachers were extremely conscientious and rarely were out, and had a very positive relationship with the students, and I found that I started to really think about pursuing a career. When I first took the job in the day school I just thought it was something I would do for a while because, of course, the extra money would be very nice to add to the family pot. Secondly, I kind of liked the feeling of doing something productive, and I just figured that I would work for a couple of years. Then I became very much immersed in the excitement of it all. I really loved the students. And I liked the challenge of always teaching and learning different materials. I would have different courses to teach each semester. The first five years that I was here I taught a total of fifteen different courses.

I found that there was always something else that I was just totally throwing myself into. My sister had been in the nursery education program here. So I worked with her and taught nursery school two mornings a week while I was teaching full time here. We organized the business. We had three- and four-year-olds. After working with my sister for a couple of years I began to realize that it was lacking one thing that was very important to me in terms of a career, and that was the social input. I needed some more stroking than I was getting from the little kids. I liked the inner feelings of reward, but I didn't like leaving little kids at home and going to little kids. I felt that I needed the challenge of talking and meeting with other adults. I liked the interaction with other faculty here on campus. I liked the male-female mixture, too, that you would get in an institution like this, rather than an elementary school. I had also taken a couple of courses on the graduate level in the evening division, thinking that I would get my graduate degree in something related to elementary education, not in business at all, and decided that it really wasn't for me.

So I left all of that behind me and started over in graduate school a few years ago. This is my third year that I have been working on a master's in educational psych and statistics. My first choice was psychology, but since I had no formal psychology background the admissions director of the psychology department said that he felt my chances of being accepted were pretty small. I was beginning to see that I was being held back professionally because I did not have a master's degree. I began to see notes in the promotion literature that would come out each year outlining the criteria that were to be considered for promotion. Among those criteria were always advanced degrees. It seemed that although it hadn't been that important before (people had been promoted to assistant professor without a master's degree--as a matter of fact we have people on campus who I think are probably either associate or full professors who do not have master's degrees) that wasn't going to be something that would happen easily in the future. I had approached my division dean and requested that I be considered for promotion to the next rank at the beginning of my third year. They did not feel that it would be a good idea for me to apply because I didn't have my master's. I thought that I'd really better get going on this whole issue and I investigated the programs that were available and felt that ed psych was probably about as close to what I really wanted as I could get, at that point.

As I began to progress through the program I became more and more disenchanted with the whole routine. I considered very seriously, last year, changing to something that I felt would be more interesting to me as well as make me more marketable. Because, you see, at this point in my life I realized that work is not something that I am doing because I want to pass the time; work is very important to me. If I were a male I would probably love staying in the office from nine in the morning till seven o'clock at night, and call home and just say, "Please throw something into the oven fast, I'm on my way," but I don't feel that I have ever had that luxury. I feel a real sense of responsibility to my children first. I don't want them coming home to an empty house. I don't want them looking for something to eat on their own. I don't want them to ever feel that they have suffered because their mother chose to work.

I investigated other areas. The area that I felt would make me more marketable, and I would be interested in,would be an MBA program. When I went to discuss the possibility of getting into an MBA program, I became a little bit discouraged because I found that the first program represented sixty hours of graduate work, which to me is, you know, a little bit staggering. Because it's difficult for me to teach all day long, run home, prepare dinner, clean it up, and then race off fresh and awake and alert to sit in a three-hour class. I am still in the ed psych and statistics program. Realistically, I thought, my goal in getting my master's is two-fold: making me more marketable but also to get me off the instructor level here. It really annoys me to be an instructor. It annoys me to see people who are not as effective in the classroom and not as conscientious and who don't really give a darn about their students, or do anything special for their students, be promoted because they have an advanced degree.

I'm teaching business communications, word processing, business math, and medical office procedures. Business communications is concerned primarily with the art and psychology of writing an effective business letter. We also deal with how to communicate effectively. I get into some time management, teach them how to use their time in the most efficient ways. Then we spend a lot of time working on the resumes, strategies, what kinds of things they should accentuate in the resume.

I consider the business math almost a preparatory course. Prepares them for some concepts in accounting, some concepts in statistics, insurance. We do trade discounts, how to figure out sales tax, property tax, basically dealing with any kind of percentage problems. Before we can get into any specific topics I have to spend about six weeks refreshing their memory on how to deal with fractions, how to deal with percentages. It's incredible what they have either forgotten or never knew, and we have such a broad mix in the classes that it's almost overwhelming. The students who have had two or more years of algebra-based math are channeled into what's called math and finance, the same kinds of concepts that I deal with but on a more sophisticated level and assuming a pretty good base in algebra. Students that I deal with may have had one year of algebra and a number of years in accounting and business math in the high school setting. Some of them, of course, did very poorly in the high school setting in these courses. Some did very well, so for some my course is just a review. It seems easy to them, they learn it quite well, they're conscientious students, they do their homework, they come to class, and I feel that I'm pretty clear. But for those who have never had these skills it is overwhelming to them. They don't understand some of the very basic things.

I try to identify these students within the first week. I do that by administering a pretest on the very first day. Those students who receive a five or below I will identify as potential candidates needing special individual attention and I'll keep my eye on them. Right after I give the pretest in the first day I go into reviewing concepts in the pretest, and then I will give another quiz at the end of that week, trying to determine how much progress has been made among the students. Those students who, after a formal presentation with lots of opportunities to try different aspects of the same problem, still can't score more than five, I feel have a real problem. Then I identify them and send them to the math lab, where they sign up on an individual basis for one-on-one tutoring services. It helps those students who do in fact attend.

I had a student who was not able after sitting in class for a four-week period to ever score above a two on anything. An older woman, who had been away from math for a very, very long time and was feeling lots of internal intimidation by suddenly being immersed in the academic world after so long and feeling like a fish out of water, was going to the math lab and she was also coming to see me on an individual basis. She's receiving nines and tens regularly now. She still needs reinforcement. It isn't as clear and as quick to her as it is to many of the kids in the class. I feel that the math lab works for those students who are interested and motivated. But it takes a fair amount of effort on their part. They have to commit themselves to two additional hours each week. It's in a different part of the campus-- it takes them ten minutes to walk up there.

The ones who are involved in accounting are primarily math orientated. They're not really interested in psychology so I find that I have to generate an awful lot of motivation in them. It is not intrinsically there as I feel it is intrinsically there for medical office procedures. The girls in medical office procedures are seniors. A lot of the weeding process has already been done. Those that weren't seriously interested in school dropped out. These girls are investigating their specialty. They want to go into and be a part of medicine and they kind of like office routine. In the medical office course we talk about what kinds of things are important in terms of patient contact. The telephone is extremely important. It represents the first contact that a patient may have with your office.

I have some students who are from very wealthy families whose families probably do not approve of their choice of college at all. I think they came to the community college because they thought that it was going to be easier than going to the four-year college. Then I have a lot of just kind of average students from average, middle-class families whose educational goals again are kind of average. I have a lot of students from economically deprived areas, particularly among the Blacks. They see themselves as different from the other students. They don't have the same camaraderie. They're isolated, they have individual problems. One of the guys in my business math class at ten o'clock most mornings invariably will come in drunk. He often doesn't appear for class. When I first began teaching, when I would ask what their career aspirations were, the thing that would always be highlighted was, "Because I want to do something for mankind, like medicine, because I can help people." "I want to be in marketing or advertising because I feel that it's a service to the community." And now the thing that surfaces is money. "I want to become a doctor because there's more money involved. There's more money in becoming an insurance broker. There's lots of possibilities in small businesses," and the money thing surfaces constantly.

Last year there were three people--males--who were promoted who did not have their master's degrees. Not to the low level of assistant professor, but to associate professor. One in fact had been here fewer years than I and that made me angry. You see if I were treated identically as everyone across the campus, then I could live with it or not be quite so angry, and say, okay, that's just a bureaucratic fact of life. I felt that, in many instances, some of the faculty might perceive their job as more important than mine because they were teaching courses that they considered more important. I had to demonstrate that my skills were just as good as anyone else's in order to have the same recognition.

I'm not a member of the secretarial faculty anymore. I'm in the business administration faculty and over the years I think others' perception of my role began to change. I felt that I was beginning to emerge as an equal in other people's eyes. When I first joined the faculty my first choice would not have been to be a part of the secretarial faculty. However, I could see that if I wanted to teach, if I wanted to be a full-time member of the faculty in business, probably I should take advantage of the opportunity that was available in the secretarial department. Because in looking at the business division's population what did

I find, in all other areas of this institution except secretarial, but males. Among a faculty of twenty-eight, one was a female, and she is a tough female, extremely assertive, a career person, you know, got into it right after college. Very technically orientated and really willing to fight right down the line for anything that she wanted. I was not like that. I didn't want to feel as if I had to scratch and claw for everything I wanted. I felt that the administration's view was rather sexist.

The business division meant males; they were the successful business people in America. And, of course, in the secretarial department we could have some females who would be very good but who would always be considered just slightly different from the rest of the faculty. We get more exams to proctor because, of course, we don't work as hard and we would have typically more preparations because our courses aren't as difficult to teach. You know, that kind of attitude. Well, with affirmative action becoming such a fact of life, about three years ago I started seeing some women being hired in other departments and decided that this was my opportunity to start mentioning that if an opportunity was available I think that I would like to change, because, of course, I had already been teaching out of my department at least six hours every year. When the position became available I was hired.

I would not have applied for promotion last year because I didn't want to put myself into a position of being rejected again, but my department chair very strongly encouraged me to do so. So I went through all of the proceedings again and was really very shocked when the person who was in charge of either turning it on or dumping it in the garbage indicated, through his secretary, that I was not going to be promoted. Then when I saw the published list of who, in fact did receive promotions and found out that the criteria that had been applied to me were not applied campus wide,I became more angry. Then I saw the person who I felt would be in charge of giving me some advice of how this issue should be handled. Was I being treated fairly, was this a sexist decision? I do feel there are different standards that apply to the females in the business division and the males in the business division; two standards in terms of salary and promotability. He said, "Calm down, you don't have to worry about a thing because with the new contract that we are now negotiating you will receive a promotion automatically. Anyone who has received tenure will be automatically promoted to assistant professor." On one hand I thought, okay, good, I don't have to confront the other individual with the anger that I'm feeling because I don't feel that I've been treated fairly; on the other hand I was even angrier because I thought, damn it, they've taken away our personal motivation again. I don't want to receive something merely because I have been here five years. I want to receive it because I deserve it, I feel that I worked for it. I really would like to be rewarded for something that

I'm doing. Just because you have a degree doesn't mean that you're doing the job that you're hired to do. I guess I feel a lot of personal frustration because of that.

Related to the issue that I did not expect my job to be a career, it didn't really matter what I made. I trusted the person with whom I was dealing on salary issues. There were no printed statistics. So, he had said to me that I would be earning $1,400 a year more if I accepted the salary figure than if I were being paid on a part-time basis. And I said, "Well, it sounds to me like you feel that they're offering me a good settlement," and he said, "Yeah, I think that it's pretty good." I guess what he neglected to add was "for someone in your position who really is using this as a second income." And I, of course, being as naive as I was, felt once I get there and they discover how wonderful I am, there will be some way of upgrading and equalizing. I'm finding that , in fact, it gets worse every year. I was much closer to the mean salary with the last contract than I am now. I will be even further away with the new salary because the contracts keep giving an eight percent or a ten percent increment to everyone.

The women who were hired in the secretarial department seventeen years ago were not promoted as regularly as men, and their salaries are consistently five to six thousand in back of the males. They all have their master's degrees. They were all comparably qualified. In the business division when the proctoring assignments are given out the women always get four and the men get three. I have never had fewer than the maximum and in most instances the men do not have more than the minimum.

I feel that I'm contributing something to society, both in terms of being a role model for many of my female students who may perceive success in the business world as rather intimidating, and also because I'm giving the students a sense of direction, particularly for the girls, to be able to consider combining having a family and being a responsible member of the community as well as having a pretty substantial professional commitment. I felt very guilty about working in my initial times because my parents considered it inappropriate and my husband felt the same way.

I'm slowly but surely indoctrinating people to believe that it is possible to balance the many roles that we have. I kind of identify with women who have chosen not to work and I see their lives as not having quite as much meaning as mine, not as much variety. You know, they go from one tennis match to another, to luncheon dates and bridge dates and golfing and they have a lot of fun. But every year is just like the last year and I don't feel that my life is like that. I feel that I'm a very different person today than I was five years ago. I would like to feel as if I'm continually learning and growing and developing. I don't feel that that's something that was limited to my high school or college experience. I have always felt that I wanted to be the best person that I could possibly be. My parents were not particularly well-educated and my dad's grammar even today is absolutely atrocious. I made a concentrated effort at changing the flaws in my own speech patterns so I have always felt kind of scratching and clawing--I'm always aspiring to another level. I do recall one comment that a dentist made to me, probably when I was in about seventh grade. He thought I was a very lovely-looking girl and he felt that it was unfortunate that I was born to the circumstances that I was because my speech pattern gave my background away. I just had this feeling that he meant that I did not speak as well as his kids. And you know from that point I just began to change.

My sister and I have chosen to take different routes. My mother put up the same roadblocks for her. She chose not to work and I was getting very definite messages from her that she felt her life was not as complete because, at forty-five, she didn't have as much meaning, as much challenge, in her life as she wanted. And now she was facing her children being college age and leaving, and here she spent so much of her life devoted to them and being available always for them, that now she's beginning to see herself putting out some of the same signals that my mother did. Saying ,"Well, certainly you don't want to go away to college, you know, here I am alone."

I want a lot of things for myself and my family that I feel are only available through not only having enough financial resources but also in terms of prestige. I see a lot of doors open to people's children because their parents have a certain level of prestige and affluence and I guess I would kind of like that for my own. I don't like the idea of being isolated in my job at the college--eat lunch at my desk, run home, do my chores within my house, and then to my course. I try to make an effort to have lunch in the faculty lounge a couple of times a week to see what other people on campus are doing. We've made contacts in tennis with people who own clubs, who have offered us certain advantages. If I see an opportunity I like to explore the opportunity to see if it's right for me.

I think that it takes a lot of people quite a while to discover that there's more to me than is their first impression. I think a lot of people don't take me seriously because I tend to be very light. They think that I'm very flighty and I am not at all. I'm probably a lot more serious and a lot more conscientious than many women who are dressed in the tweedy little wools and glasses and flat shoes and, you know, very conservative image, but it just takes a while for people to discover it. I just don't feel that I have to be a stereotype.

I feel that I'm a lot more assertive than the average individual and sometimes I think that, particularly with males in our society, they're not really ready for that kind of assertiveness in females. For instance, many times after work if, for instance, my children are not coming home and my husband is not going to be home until five-thirty or six, I would not feel comfortable walking into one of our local restaurants that has a cocktail lounge and just sitting down with many of the male faculty who I know gather there all the time. I know that they would welcome me but there would always be in the back of their mind, why is she here, is she trying to pick somebody up. Can't I just go in for the very same reasons that you may go in, just for the companionship and the camaraderie and to relax and have one drink before I go home? I don't want to have to justify why I am here. Can you understand that?

When I first started working at the college I had lunch all the time in restaurants in the area with many of the male faculty members and it was fun. I really enjoyed doing that. I enjoyed them as individuals and I enjoyed them as professional people. But I was constantly getting comments from some of the other female faculty and some of the other male faculty as well, "Well, how come you're having lunch with Mr. X? What's going on?" And there really wasn't anything going on. But if I was getting these comments they were getting them as well, and not only were they getting them from the other faculty but they would get them from their wives, and if I would meet their wives, at a cocktail party they would say, "Oh you're the one that they mentioned." If I would mention to my husband that I went to lunch with so and so he wasn't all that enthusiastic about it either. So I felt that I was continually having to justify sharing time with people I enjoyed being with merely because they were of the opposite sex. I don't go to lunch with them very often anymore.

I was aware in my childhood that I was more assertive than the average female and I always tried to tone down those characteristics to make me more acceptable to my female counterparts and to not intimidate the males as well. And at some point in my life I decided the hell with them. This is what I am and if they don't like me then I am never going to be able to be myself with people.

The committees are male dominated. A lot of the women who are a part of the faculty are almost considered part-time in that they do their thing and then they leave because they have family commitments. They don't become involved in a lot of the committee work. The men seem to have more of an interest in what's going on on the campus and seem to be more verbal.

I've been on a number of committees where problems have been thrown out--how shall we deal with this issue? And a lot of the men have offered some solutions to the problem. I think that one of my skills happens to be the ability to see a problem and then put it in its proper perspective, and then offer a solution. I've offered these solutions and I don't get credit for the fact that that was my suggestion. Somehow it gets buried and sometimes it was a little bit frustrating to me where they wouldn't say to me, "Oh, yeah, that was a good idea." They would brush over it and just kind of incorporate it and the suggestion that ultimately was used was mine. But nobody said, "Hey, that was really a good idea." Men in many instances do not like to admit to the fact that women may have ideas that are as good as if not better than their own. You know they sometimes feel that in order to maintain their own self-image they have to keep women at a slightly reduced level. This is a very real thing. Initially this made me feel very frustrated and very angry. I don't like it at all. I don't like to have to subconsciously apologize for the fact that I'm a woman. I like being a woman.

I had a problem in my department that was crucial, that my colleague and I solved in terms of getting the right room for our word processing center. The administration wanted to put us in a very, very small room that would have been totally inadequate. In order for me ever to use the chalkboard I would have had to stand on a desk. I could not have had any overhead projector or any extra teaching materials in the room. Students would have been uncomfortable. In order for me to get what I wanted, in order for me to not alienate the people--the men with whom I had to deal to get the decision that I wanted--I had to be so devious that I had to make them feel that the outcome was their idea. Once they decided that it was their idea they would love it and present the idea to me for adoption. Ultimately it came out just the way we wanted it. They really did feel that it was their idea and they were just patting themselves on the back.

I am under a great deal of pressure, both professionally and personally, but I create that pressure myself. I mean I have a certain standard that I expect of myself. I don't want to fail with my children because I feel that my parents would blame me, but I don't want to fail because of me either. Because I feel that being a parent is an extremely important role. I feel that it is a responsibility that I chose to undertake and there aren't that many really important roles that people have in society. One of them is being a good parent, and it's a lifetime thing, so I don't want to fail, for me. Because I feel I have to live with my failure. If I felt that there was something that I could have done for them that I didn't do, that would nag at me, that would really bother me, that would probably even destroy me.

I feel a certain amount of prestige coming behind the attitudes of most people toward me when they discover that I teach at a community college. I don't think that I would have the same feeling of prestige if I said that I were a secretary. Some of my friends are secretaries and they are earning $25,000 a year. I find that in a social context they are not perceived as having the same intellectual caliber as I do, you know, good at the keyboard but perhaps a little bit limited intellectually. I don't think I would have flourished at the four-year college at all. The faculty there were very stuffy. If you didn't have your doctorate they really didn't take you seriously. The attitudes that they had toward other faculty tended to be disparaging if they didn't publish that much or do much research or have their doctorate.

I think that I was a very insecure individual until I was about twenty-five. I don't think that I knew who I was or where I was going. I think that a lot of my choices and a lot of my self-concept developed from the environment that I was in. I was beginning to realize the strengths that I had from my students, the reactions that my students had to me, the reaction that my neighbors would have to me, the reaction that other parents would have to me, the reaction of the teachers in the school system. I was asked a lot to participate in programs that the teachers would have and at first I thought it was just because I was available. But then I began to realize that they were asking me to do this because they felt that I could do it well, that they could rely on me.

I think that it would have been a terrible, terrible mistake for me to, had we been able to, move to an affluent area. I would not have been perceived in the same light. I would have constantly gotten the message, well, who is your father, what did your father do. There's an awful lot of this old-line attitude in this area. My name is Donovan. The local doctor is named Donovan, and people in this affluent group said, "Oh, are you such and such Donovan's daughter?" And I'd feel this frigid response when I would say, "Oh, no, we're not related at all." "Well, who is your father? Aren't you local?" And I would say that he was the local barber. It just was a different feeling that I didn't really like. It took me a long time to stop being embarrassed by who my parents were. When I was at college I didn't like to say that my father was a barber and it really embarrassed me at a social function to hear the language inadequacy that my dad had in comparison to these very well-spoken senators and doctors and professional people. It wasn't so important at the community college. My father was very active in the local politics. They were able to accept him as a person. I didn't feel that I had to apologize for who my father was.

If I had not gotten married as early in my life as I did, I probably would have made all different choices. I probably would have gone into private industry, management. I expect that I probably would have gone back to school, or continued in my education, and been one of the pioneer women receiving their MBA's. I may have been a career person, I might not . I think I would have married. I kind of always liked the idea of being married. I think that initially in our marriage my husband was much better with the idea of having a child than I was. I worked at becoming Linda Donovan, the mother. It wasn't a natural thing for me, like cleaning my house, not a natural thing. I'm at another turning point in my life. I think that I'm through another passage, where a career began to become important to me.

Well, now a career is not only important to me, but a full-blown, exciting, lucrative career is important to me. And I have to investigate where I can best fulfill those goals.

Profile

JOSEPHINE SANDERS

(Josephine Sanders, in her thirties, teaches business and secretarial courses at a community college in Massachusetts. She was interviewed twice in her office and once in her home in the spring of 1982.)

I was born in South Carolina in 1949 and I am the oldest of three children. I have two brothers, both younger than I. We lived in a small wooden house near a creek in a very rural area of South Carolina. My parents were poor. Their parents were sharecroppers so that farming was very much a part of their lives and it was very much a part of my life. When I was about five my parents were separated. Part of that time I stayed with my father's parents and during the summer I would stay with my mother's parents. Then my parents reconciled, tried to make another go of it. I went to a small elementary school, an all Black school--Black faculty, Black students. While I stayed with my grandparents I worked in the fields, chopping and picking cotton and growing vegetables and since it was sharecropping, half of what we did went to pay the rent. The other half we would use to eat.

My grandfather on my father's side was the person who kind of talked with me and told me that everything was all right when my parents were going through that really rough time. I am the oldest grandchild on both sides, so my grandfather always felt that I was special. He always had a habit of giving me something; whether it was a piece of gum, it was kind of something between the two of us and only the two of us knew about it. One day we were sitting next to the heater and he reached in his pocket and gave me a quarter, and at that time, thinking that I'm not going to take his money because I know that it is limited and I am working now I can afford quarters, I said, "Oh, no, I don't need the quarter." I saw the hurt in his eyes and it just about killed me, so even today he will reach into his pocket and give me a quarter or a dime or a dollar and I take it and never make any bones about that. That's his way of sharing with me something that is just private between the two of us.

When I was in the seventh grade both my brothers and I began living with my mother's parents. They had a large truck farm where they grew vegetables, and we would pick the vegetables and then go and sell them into the neighborhoods where people could afford to buy them. We lived on a kind of a sandy hill, and after school, before we had to do farming kinds of things and on the weekends, we played a lot and there were a lot of trees and woods and blackberry patches.

I remember getting up in the morning about five-thirty or six o'clock and having to be in the field by seven, because if we were being picked up by the man who owned the cotton fields we would have to be ready like six-thirty so that we can be picking cotton by seven. The sun was not up high by that time, dew would still be on the ground so your feet would get wet and it would be cold until the sun dried the dew off of the grass. Getting up in the mornings sometimes and having my grandfather say, "You know you're not going to school today." I'd be dressed to go to school and I'd say, "Why?" "Because the cotton has to be picked." Our livelihood took preference over my going to school, took preference over any of us going to school.

Carrying sacks of cotton is not easy, and if you have, when you are picking in the morning, still dew on the cotton, that's heavy. Carrying watermelons-- that's heavy, or fertilizing corn, rows of corn. That had to be done with cow manure, which wasn't too pleasant. I remember plowing and being much shorter than this and having to plow and I think about it now and I don't even know how I did it.

My mother talked about not being able to go to school because farming came first and her father talked about it, so it was something that had been going on for a long while. It happened more when I was between the fourth and the sixth grades than it did when I was older. When cotton picking season came that's what we had to do, and when the vegetables were ripe we had to go into the fields and pick them.

I enjoyed school. I was the person in the class who got along with everybody. I had fun. I had very good teachers who would send the homework home to me when I stayed home from school. My fourth grade teacher also taught my father and the cafeteria supervisor--her daughter and I were very close friends. My first grade teacher was a friend of my mother's. You have a half an hour for recess and on cold days we would have hot chocolate. It was a small school and people knew one another and they knew the families of the children that went to school. It was from the first to the seventh grade and I'd say between one hundred and fifty to two hundred people. There was just one bus that would come to the school in the morning; the rest of the students who lived nearby could walk.

My second grade teacher was a robust woman and when she would hold you, you just kind of got smothered. She had never married and so I think she just kind of took all of us under her wing. She considered all of us her children. Easter time she'd bring in goodies. And when we needed whipping we got beatings in the classroom and she'd tell us that if you got a beating in school you deserved it, and if you complained when you got home you got another one.

My great-aunt, my maternal grandmother's sister, taught me to read. She taught me the alphabet before I started school. I remember her taking me through the alphabet and whenever I missed I would have to stand in the corner on one leg until I got it right. And then I remember reading in the newspaper about a car accident, and I was reading it to my father and he says, "Oh, stop playing around, you can't really read that," and my mother picked up the newspaper and said, "Yes, she is reading it." That was the first time that I remember reading something.

I was conscious of Black and white before I went to the fields, from my parents and from my grandparents, simply by just listening to the things that they said. My grandfather would come in the afternoon and say that he had picked one hundred and fifty pounds of cotton and I think at that time they were paying one dollar and fifty cents a hundred so that would be a whole day's work. He would make two dollars and twenty-five cents, and that was hard work. I remember my grandfather being angry and calling some choice names. I was aware that there was something going on that was wrong and it had something to do with Black and it had something to do with white. When the insurance man would come to the house, my grandmother would have to call him Mr. So-and-So and he would call her Carrie. We were made to respect our elders and we had to call the next door neighbor Mrs. Brown. So I couldn't understand how this person could get away with it. My grandmother at that time was probably in her fifties and this guy was just in his twenties, probably right out of school.

The civil rights activities were going on in the South and I took part the summer of '63 or summer of '64. We had organized, in conjunction with the church, to boycott the stores downtown. We had it set up so that we had rallies at the churches in the evening and then would meet in the mornings at the churches where groups would go out, and we would be assigned different stores and instructed specifically on what we were to do and what we were not to do. One person in the front of the line was instructed to talk with any police if they should come up and ask us questions. We were trained to take notes of names and badge numbers. I got to lead a couple of those groups. Our contention at that time was that it was not necessary for Blacks to grow up in South Carolina, and go to school in South Carolina, and graduate from high school, and have to leave in order to come to New York to work in a dime store. So we boycotted the stores and it was very effective. Some of us got thrown in jail. People were shot at; you are riding along on a bus and you hear a bullet fly by, that kind of thing. We got through that but it impressed upon me that there was a struggle for Black folks in this country and that summer made me realize that--to know that the officials in the towns were members of the KKK and to ride by a field and see a cross burning and see the KKK having their meeting!

My mother was in New York and, at that point, she had gotten an apartment and wanted to have us with her, so the summer after I completed my eighth grade I left and came to New York. I continued from the ninth grade to the twelth grade in a high school in the Bronx. It seemed like a huge school at the time; there were all kinds of different people, Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics, and West Indian, and it was an adjustment for me at first. Walking to classrooms and seeing white faces. I had never up to that point had any dealings with Hispanics at all so that the language was new to me. And to hear the West Indians talk, that was all new to me. But I got to know my teachers really well and made friends very easily. I think when I first went to high school a lot of the students and the faculty thought that I was West Indian and that may have helped me initially. The attitude of whites towards foreigners was a lot more lenient than it was toward American Blacks. I got on work study, worked for a while in the counselors' office and then worked in the library.

There were lots of things going on when I was in high school. We had to critique a play by Shakespeare and I took great pains doing it. At the top of the paper my English teacher wrote "much ado about nothing." Oh, that was painful. I took the paper and redid it and got an A on it. She worked with me to do that. She was that kind of a person. My shorthand teacher was the one person who really taught me to proofread. She put a can on her desk and said, "Every typing error that I find you have to put a nickel in the can and you don't get it back." I lost a lot of money that semester but as a result I learned how to proofread and now do it very well.

The only thing that I had to adjust to was that there was a white person standing in front of the class and the experiences that I had **had** with whites prior to that were unpleasant. So I was very quiet at first, listening and watching, watching what the teacher did and how **she** handled the people in the classroom; really getting a feel if that person cared about, or treated all the students in her class the same way.

I couldn't get used to the idea that people were living on top of one another in these big buildings and there was not a backyard. There was no place that you could take your shoes off and run in the sand and in the grass. But there were so many places to go and that's when I got involved with going to movies and plays. My two brothers were there. It was an area of the Bronx that a lot of gangs were in. They didn't present a problem to the people who lived in the neighborhood, so it was an everyday thing for me, it wasn't a problem. We had a three-room apartment, one bedroom, and my mother and I slept in the living room and my brothers had the bedroom. When we moved there were still some whites in the building and Hispanics, West Indians, all kinds of people in the neighborhood. I lived quite a ways from high school so I took the bus.

I graduated from high school in 1968. I remember after Martin Luther King was killed I was on my way home from working part-time in a department store and had not heard about it until I got home that evening. The next day at school the social studies instructor walked in and said that Martin Luther King should not have been standing on the balcony where he was standing and he deserved to have gotten what he got. And I mean the kids in the class went bananas.

The women who were really important in my life were my teachers. I saw the kind of respect that teachers got at that time and the kind of work they put in and that was something that I wanted to do. I wanted to teach since I was in the fifth grade. And I knew that I wanted to couple that with secretarial work somehow. Somewhere in the elementary school I saw someone typing and that whole thing fascinated me. I just wanted to learn how to type and I had read about the secretarial field and knew that there could be opportunities in that field for me and then I knew that I wanted to teach so that I somehow knew that the two would get meshed some day. The typewriter that was in that elementary school --they allowed me to put a piece of paper in and play around with it. I learned how to type my name and little short sentences.

My first formal typing class was when I went to the high school. In the ninth grade, a counselor asked me what did I want to take and I said the business courses. So I got the accounting, well of course, history, English, math classes and then I had the typing. I had biology too. There were three avenues that you could have taken while you were in high school. There were men who were in business. They had the bookkeeping and the accounting. And then there were women who did the liberal arts stuff, the straight academic. Then most of the people who chose to do the secretarial or home ec route were all women.

After high school I went for a year to a community college which was in the Bronx. I was taking liberal arts courses. After that I went to another community college and took business, not straight secretarial, and was in a cooperative program where my sophomore year I got to work in a business doing secretarial work. Did pretty much everything in the office. I got credit for doing that, as well as being paid for it, so that was my cooperative experience. My instructors at the community college were Black and white. My bosses at the company were all white. Learned a lot about company politics. If your boss is not promoted you didn't go anywhere so your promotion or your getting anywhere in that company was latched on to what your boss did. If he was ineffective and stayed, you also stayed, if he was a go-getter and moved up, you also moved up. After I finished at the community college and transferred on, I left that job because that was a cooperative experience and someone else took over when I left.

Of all the years that I have attended college, those two years probably were the happiest for me. It was business and I liked what I was doing. There were courses that I had that were difficult and I had to work hard at them. I remember a business law class being very difficult for me. I also remember a music class that was very difficult. I don't sing and the music and the notes and all that stuff meant nothing to me. I love music but that was a hard class for me to get through. Every A that I made I worked for it. I was not the person who could not go to class or not study and walk in and A the exam. I was probably a solid B, B+ student.

When I finished the community college I chose a private four-year school on the recommendation of a counselor. I saw the catalogue and they had a business education program there and a teaching program. The first semester I worked. I had a part-time job at a church in Harlem, secretary to the minister. Lots of times I worked until eight and nine o'clock at night to try to make the money to buy books. Second year it was a lot more difficult and I borrowed money from the bank, the student loan. I think it was like $85 or $87 a credit. To me at that time it was a lot of money and I had to buy clothes and books and I was also helping out at home. My brothers were still in school. My mother was helping them out and I helped out with the rent. So I needed the job as well as the money that I borrowed from the bank. I went to summer school. Got all of the courses that I needed to be certified to teach and did my practice teaching at my old high school.

My secretarial work was a lot of work and it was hard work. When I was at the insurance company I did the secretarial kinds of things and there were other people to do some of it, but when I was at the church, I did everything. I did light bookkeeping, I typed all of his sermons, and I did letters for him. I typed up his speeches. I was a one-girl office and I did all of it. I was beginning to feel that secretarial work was very important. It was not just sitting down to the typewriter, looking glamorous all day and not chipping a nail, and zipping through the day looking gorgeous. It was hard work and that's how I perceived it and that's how I knew it was.

The college wasn't as closely knit as the community college. The instructors there were doing other things. Because it was a four-year school they were involved in research and some of them had part-time jobs at other places so that I felt they could not devote as much time. I had a money and banking course that was a killer. The secretarial teachers were very friendly people. My shorthand instructor there was, I thought, terrific because she could stand at the board and write both systems at once, one with the left hand and one with the right hand. Two different systems, Gregg and Pittman, and I just thought she was something from outer space.

The head of the secretarial department talked me into going to graduate school. Said to me, "You should go on to graduate school to get a degree because it will make it that much better for you for teaching. The more degrees you get and the more courses you add, the more money that you make and the better it is for you when they are getting rid of people. The degrees count as well as longevity." He suggested that I go to NYU and I applied. The first year I attended NYU I was still working at the church. The second year I got a teaching job in Brooklyn, a full-time teaching job in an alternative school, and worked full time for a year.

Then the budget crunch happened and, of course, I was the last one in so I was the first one out. I had been used to working since I had been fifteen or sixteen. I didn't know what to do with myself. Sitting at home during the day was driving me crazy. I got a call from this community college because I had attended a conference with the woman who was formerly head of this department. She called and said there was a vacancy. I had a week to get a resume and letters of recommendation ready and then came here.

When I first came here to the community college, being the new girl on the block, I had a heavy load. The first three or four semesters I was here I carried five classes. Now I have four classes. In addition to doing that I have taught Continuing Ed classes every year since I have been here except last semester. Since I've been here I have taught pretty much all of the courses in the secretarial curriculum. My work here is busy, very busy, because of the nature of courses that we teach. Secretarial work is continual correcting. Students need to get feedback immediately because of the way that we teach typewriting. I'm using an individualized approach so that students get their primary instruction from a slide-tape presentation. I am in class and we call those group meetings. If there is anything on the slides that they didn't understand, that is gone over in class. By the nature of what I teach, I have to do continual correcting and so it is very busy, almost every night.

I came here in '76 and was the first full-time Black instructor that they had had here. There was a lot of adjusting to me when I first came and to a certain extent that is still going on. My first couple of years here were difficult. I guess that's the only word that I can describe it with. The first year that I was here I had to let students and faculty know that I had proper credentials, and that there was nowhere on my diploma that said that I was only supposed to teach Black folk. I was the first Black person that they had had any real contact with so they didn't really know how to deal with that. There were instances of my having to justify everything that I did. One instructor could walk into a classroom and say, this is it, it would be accepted. I had to walk into the classroom and say, this is it, and I would have to justify why I said it. I think it was just they were not used to dealing with a Black person. For them it was a new experience.

Some of the students have gotten to know me really well . The students who want to work take my courses because I do have high criteria for my students. They know now that I can teach and I know the subject matter. But every now and then, for new students who come in, it sometimes gets to be a problem. "Why don't you correct the way Miss So-and-So does it" or "Why don't you give your test the way Miss So-and-So does?"

The second year that I came here, there was lots of talk about cutbacks and some teachers having to leave. One instructor came to my office and said, "You don't have to worry about leaving because you are never ever going to get fired," and I said "Why?" And he said, "Well, you are the only Black person here." And I said, "What does that have to do with it," and he said, "Well, you know, that's why you are here." In essence what he was telling me was that I was the school's token at that time.

Recently I was called down to the division chair's office and the suggestion was made to me that I change my testing, that I include essay questions on the test, so that the students could "make better grades." Initially when I prepared the course I had planned to have essay questions, but the first week of school I had to change that because the regular enrollment was thirty maximum and I had forty-three people in the class. But I talked to the class, we decided, as a class, what was going to be the testing format. Essays would be a lot easier for me to make up, but would not be easy for me to correct. It would take more time. Last week was very difficult for me. Probably the first time that I seriously thought about leaving. I enjoy teaching and that is something that I want to continue to do for awhile but I don't know if it is worth continually having to fight for the job. I really don't just know if it is worth it.
I would have expected that things would have been a lot better as I grew into the job. The first year I ignored a lot of stuff because that was, I thought, just part of getting used to the job and the people. You are tested and students test you and colleagues test, but six and a half years later, it's no longer a test, or it is a test of a different sort.

There are just certain things that people are not willing to accept about me, being Black and the way that I am. One of the comments that was made to me was, "You never come to see any of us in our offices," and I say, "Why must I come to you?" Again, that's a concept some whites have. This whole busing thing, you know, about Black students must be bused over there, but you know whites can't be bused, it's a one-way kind of thing. So I come in and I do my work and I leave. With a minimum amount of interaction.

It's frustrating for me because the interaction with colleagues I think is important. But you see the kind of interaction that I am most comfortable with is not telling people my personal life, and sometimes that's what people want to know. My colleagues perceive me as someone who is anti-social. That bothers me, it's frustrating. Probably what hurts me most is that I'm going to request a promotion next year and I suspect that that decision is going to be hampered by this whole situation. While I'm here I'm very busy, I'm with students or with papers or whatever. I don't have time to just physically get up and go visit somebody because if I'm not in classes then I'm in office hours.

At lunchtime I go in and find a table and sit down and eat. Usually alone, because the person that I talk with, when I have an on-campus hour, has an office hour and we are not allowed to leave our offices during office hours, we should be there for the students. So I usually go and grab something to eat and that takes about one half hour. I don't mind eating alone, that's the way that it is.It would be very hard for me as a single person to just go out and sit down and have a drink or have lunch. When I lived in New York and I worked at the high school it was not uncommon for one of the guys to come and say, "Why don't we go out to lunch together?" and if he were married we would go out and talk abut his family or whatever. It was very difficult for me to understand that here you are not allowed to establish a real healthy relationship with someone of the opposite sex who is married, that's taboo. I remember asking once, "Can we go down and have a drink or something?" Oh no, that was the wrong thing to do.

Opportunities for promotión right now are almost nil. Our promotions are school-wide, rather than department-wide. There have been some opportunities to do some of the things that I wanted to do. I wrote up a proposal for and coordinated a clerical skills program for women who had been out of the work force for awhile and who had been out of school. That was funded for three semesters and got really good support. My responsibilities were to recruit the students for the program, hire the teachers for it, and just do the overall coordination. I got an opportunity to do that, but I can't see any other opportunities. Promotion would be the only way to get to do other things here.

I am in a doctoral program for my own personal satisfaction really, because getting that degree doesn't automatically mean that I am promoted, or does not automatically mean that I get more money. So it is for me, and if I should ever decide to leave, it would just be another degree that I think would help me better compete for a position. If I were to apply for a promotion, I'm hoping they would look upon the fact that I have completed that degree as being a plus.

I don't perceive myself as being powerful in this division. No, I don't. When I came here, I was told that they would be glad to have my input as far as the skills center was concerned because they knew that I had experience with one from the ground up. So I offered my input at meetings and the suggestions were politely put aside and then two months later someone came up with the same suggestion and it would pass. That happened a couple of times, and that was again, I thought, because I was new. But it continued to happen. I got to the point where I started to document stuff just for my own sanity. I don't perceive myself as having power to make suggestions and have them seriously considered. There have been opportunities where I planted seeds and no problems, they passed. I guess from inside knowing that that was mine gave me some satisfaction, but no one else knew it. I am a lot quieter at meetings now than I used to be. Now the way that I feel about them is that I go to the meetings if there is any voting to be done. I vote and I listen to what is said and that's pretty much it. As far as coming in with suggestions or ideas I don't do that anymore.

It hasn't been all negative. I've met and worked with some really super students and I think that the thing that has probably kept me here was that I still get excited about what goes on in the classroom. There are students who learn and you know you can almost see when the light comes on, so that still excites me. I guess when that stops I will quit because all the other hassles really are not worth it.

I enjoy lecturing and I enjoy talking in class. I think the fact that I have worked in the field also adds to my ability to make that stuff come alive in the classroom. I can tell them that what's in the book may not work and I can help them with the theory and the practical part of it. I get excited when students just take off and go with the typing for example, because it is individualized, no one person has to be held back. I have one woman who finished the course last week, almost a month before the course ended. It was obvious that she just caught on and she did the work and she was excited about doing it. When they ask questions which tell me that they have been reading and they have been thinking about what they have read, that excites me. To have a student start out with a D or F and then end up with a C or with a B, I can't help but think that the two of us did that; along with my help the student was able to move from one point to another. And that keeps me here.

In the clerical skills program I told you about, two of those women came into the program without high school diplomas. They worked with us for fifteen weeks. They are both now teaching assistants in the word processing lab, and they got the jobs because they were good. One student is going to be graduating in June. This is a woman who came back after she had raised three children and was divorced. Her husband left and she said that she needed some more things in her life and along with those courses came the counseling and the confidence building and she's come back to school and is now much more vocal than she ever was and I have no doubt that she is going to go out and get a super job. And there have been other students who have gone on to get very good jobs, a couple of cases where students were making more money than I am making now. Students who have gone to Washington to work for the government. Some students who got entry level positions and then moved on and some of them come back and let you know how they are doing now.

I would like to be able to do more of the things that I did in the clerical skills program, do more grant writing, and then still stay in teaching. The clerical skills program was an opportunity to help another group of people. I've got people in my family who didn't have a chance to do that, who had to quit school and didn't have a chance to get the high school diploma , so I guess I have a soft spot in my heart so that it was easy for me to work with them. And that's why it grew, that program in particular. I know that once people leave high school for whatever reason--if they left because they had to go out and work or the women because they were pregnant, they don't usually come back. The women who came into the program said that they didn't really want to go back to their neighborhood high school because they were older and they would be stuck in a classroom with younger people. They didn't have the credentials to go on to a four-year school so the community college, being where it is, is a unique place to address those people. And we were right in the community and we had the equipment. They could come to us without having a high school diploma, if we could set the program up and set the times that were comfortable for them, because many of them had families, small children, so they couldn't make it all day for example. So this program ran from nine to twelve, so that by one o'clock they were out of there and they could pick their kids up in the afternoon and be home when they got home from school.

Given the number of years I've been here I probably should have, I don't know how to put it, I should have more say, for example, in scheduling. I'm not talking about times. I'm talking about my not being given all the correcting courses for example. The shorthand and typing are just correcting courses, and maybe that's just the way that I felt, that if you spend time there for a while you should get less of them and have some diversity. It's difficult for me right now because I don't feel that I'm using the education that I do have and I know I'm not using all the skills that I know I've got. And in a sense I guess I'm feeling stuck right now. I'm not utilizing, I'm not doing the best that I can do. I work with people and I'm good with my students and I know that. The students who are willing to come in there and work, we move, and that's perceived as being hard. The students always say it is hard and then they get through it and then they appreciate it afterwards and then they come back and they tell you . I think maybe I am underutilized.

I think that they may not be perceiving it as a racial thing, but they often don't look beyond my color and that, in effect, impairs their vision. I see color when people make me see color. In a good number of instances my colleagues have made me see color. In effect, I think they don't see beyond the fact that I am a Black person. One person on the faculty is European and had not really had a lot of contact with Blacks, so he came to my office just to find out and ask questions and I can appreciate that. I would prefer people asking questions because it is a sign that maybe they really don't know and would like to know, rather than making assumptions that could be wrong.

How does it feel to be stuck? I'm looking at this as just a temporary "stuck." I don't always intend to stay in this position. It feels right now that they are making two steps up and three back. It is frustrating, I guess that's the best word I can use.

I'm angry because I have to fight and I thought that kind of fighting was behind me and it's not. This is 1982 and I did a lot of that kind of fighting in '64, so how many years is that? You know, when I look at it not much has changed. There has been the illusion that there's been change. I'm angry that I have to still fight the same kind of fight. Fighting for job, fighting against what is obviously ignorance and prejudice--that was the same kind of fight I was fighting in '64.

There are two of us who get the beginning level courses. It's difficult to have three typing courses in one semester, and a shorthand. That is all correcting so you go nuts; you correct all the time and I think that could just be spread around evenly. There are people who have been here a couple of years longer than I who will say, "I don't want typing," and there are people who have not had typing for a couple of years. There are people who prefer not to teach certain courses and don't have to teach them.

The division chair with the registrar will make up a master schedule for the division. She will give me a schedule and this time she said, "These schedules are already concrete so no changes." So I couldn't change it if I wanted to. I still do feel that if you are hired you should be able to teach whatever course they give you. Last year I had all eight o'clock classes and that was rough getting through that. I would have an eight o'clock, a nine o'clock, and then have three hours break and then another class in the afternoon. And on Friday, I came in for one class. That's the way the schedule happened to work out that particular semester.It bothered me a lot at first because I saw the inequities in that system that they had, and people would say things like, " I got to get my kids out to go to school, so I can't have an eight o'clock class," and I didn't have any kids so I really didn't have an excuse for an eight o'clock class. It would have been nice if I had maybe just two or three eight o'clock classes. I just didn't get a lot of sleep. I always wanted to get the papers back the next day because they couldn't go on until I gave them the feedback. Then I'd have to get up in the morning at six-thirty so that I could get out of here to get to an eight o'clock class. Sometimes I got there five after eight, so that they would be standing outside waiting for me. It was hard. But I got through that semester.

Right now I'm just tired. It is very difficult to go, to leave someplace unless you have got a job in hand. I guess there is a fear on my part about not having a job. It means that I'm not going to be able to help my mother and it means that I'm not going to be able to help my brother if he needs it. Right now that's practical stuff and so I'm staying here for that. And I'm staying because of the kids, because, by and large, they are good and I enjoy that. This job right now is important to me because I want to finish school. It's important to me right now because there are people who depend on me. I almost have never been without a job except for the three months between the time that I did not have a job in New York and the time I got this job. I guess that's just part of my upbringing. As my grandmother says, you have a job and you are independent and you don't have to depend on anybody for anything.

When I first came here, I think that, in some ways, I was a lot stronger than I am now. It is just the constant battle has made me weak, and that's why it becomes easy for me sometimes to say I'm not going to fight it. Not that I was very vocal but I would sit in a meeting and if I heard things going on in the meeting that were wrong I would say I think we are doing the students a disservice. For example, at one point we were talking about raising the standards for typewriting. The standards that we had when I first came were really very low and they were not a challenge to the students at all. I went to a meeting and some of the teachers said that this is the way it has always been and I had no qualms about speaking up and saying, "I think we are wrong. I think we are just not challenging the students enough." It took a good while for that to get changed, but it did get changed. Now I hear things and I don't hear. So that it is a kind of a complacency, yes, and I guess I don't like that, because that's not me, that's not how I was. It should be the other way around, the older you get the stronger you should become. I suspect that coupled with the fear and the insecurity there is some conflict.

What am I going to do? Right now the thing that's foremost in my mind is getting through the semester. And I will just have to take it day by day. I don't know what I'm going to do. I would like to get married. That's what I meant before when I said I can't get on with the rest of my life, some of the social things I'd like to do. I think about marriage and having children and it is not in my immediate future, that's for sure.

When I first moved here I kind of, in the back of my head, wanted to start my own school. I wanted to go home and do that, back to South Carolina. It would be a business type, secretarial school, and you can train students on word processing. Twenty years from now, I'd like to be married, maybe, and have a family, and, if not working, being self-employed working. I'd like the community college level. I think that the high school level is very challenging, so even if I were in the high school in a place where I could do some teaching and have some say in maybe the policy or helping the students in counseling it would be fine. I'd like to, at that point, have enough money to be able to travel.

The only thing really about being single, the coming home is hard. There is nobody to come home and talk to about what's going on. So I pick up the phone and call my aunt or call my mother, just to talk. Being female, that's no problem. The women I think in our division outnumber the men, so that's not a real problem. But the not being able to talk with anybody, it's hard. I just come in here and yell and scream and throw things. I am paying at least three salaries to New England Telephone.

It pleases my mother that I'm doing something that she does not perceive as hard labor. She calls sometimes and says, "What are you doing there, never mind, I know what you are doing, you are correcting papers." But she is glad that I don't have to do what she has been doing. And my grandfather--I'm his oldest grandbaby who is teaching, that's how he describes me to people. He is happy for me. Because it is very important for him to know that people are independent and he has been that way for all of his life and he started his children that way. It's not just my teaching. He just says, "As long as you've got a good job and you are happy." That's how he thinks of it.

Profile

PETER LAMBERT

(Peter Lambert, in his forties, teaches business and secretarial subjects in a Massachusetts metropolitan community college. We interviewed him in his office in the spring of 1980.)

In high school I was a B+ student, top quarter of my class. Went to a suburban school. I played basketball, not varsity, played hockey, not varsity, did a lot of student activities. I liked high school and did well academically.

I decided to go to college before I finished elementary school. I knew I was going to college. My father went to college. My mother has a two-year secretarial degree from a two-year college. It was understood in our family that the boys go to college, and the girls go to nursing school or become teachers. I graduated from high school in 1959. I worked for the Kennedy election campaign.

It was a different time. It was a time when I guess we felt that we had an impact on society. That was, I thought, Kennedy's legacy: there is no problem that is not created by humans and therefore cannot be solved by humans, and if we can only apply our energies to the problems we have we can resolve them. That was the feeling at the time, that we could resolve the civil rights issue, we could ease the tensions of the cold war by limiting nuclear weapons, that it was possible to put more Americans to work and spread the distribution of wealth around. Martin Luther King was saying that he could have an impact, nonviolence could have an impact on civil rights.

I went to a private Catholic college. My math was very good but not strong enough for engineering, so one of the recommendations was that I go into the field of accounting. I enrolled in the business department. I did well in accounting, but I didn't enjoy it. I just couldn't picture myself as being an accounting type. I worked part time and summer vacations as a truck driver at a lumber yard. There were accountants in the lumber yard and I would see their work and I would see mine and I found neither to be very appealing as far as something that I wanted to do the rest of my life.

Remember back in that time Kennedy instilled a lot of idealism in the American youth, and there was much talk of the Peace Corps. It was in its initial stages then. I decided to join the Christian Brothers. I joined in 1960 and I was following their program to become a teacher. The teaching appealed to me. I stayed with the Christian Brothers for six years. I finished my bachelor's degree at a Catholic university. They had many liberal professors who were much more aware of the liberal trends in America than the Catholic church was at the time. It was the time of Vatican Two.

Then I went to work in New York City in a junior high school. The school was in South Bronx, a very poor school. The first year there we didn't have any books. We had one book for geography--I don't know where they picked it up and everything else we had to do with the mimeograph machine or the ditto machine. We would teach eight o'clock in the morning to three in the afternoon and then we had the track team from three to five. At night I was also going to Hunter College. I got a master's degree in economics. So it was a full day. I was busy, I was working with people. That was a time when people thought that community action groups could get something done and we were cleaning up the neighborhood, getting rid of old mattresses on the street. It was a very active time. There was very little time for reflection about what you were going to do with your life. Maybe that is true of many people of my age, that we didn't seriously begin considering career planning, oh, until the job market kind of dried up in the early seventies. I was teaching, in the junior high school, disadvantaged students, working very hard and had no time to think about planning for what I wanted to do for my life. It was also part of the life of a Christian Brother--that the institution decided where you were going to go next.

That gets me up to 1968. In 1968 I left the Christian Brothers. I had completed all the course work for my master's degree, and I was thinking about writing a thesis. I wanted to do something on community work, community cooperative efforts. I wanted to travel. In Mexico the "Ejido" is a cooperative farm unit. I wanted to go down and see what this was about. When I left, the Christian Brothers gave me a check for $500. With the $500 I bought a round-trip ticket from New York to Corpus Christi, Texas. My idea was to get off the plane there and hitchhike or take a bus down to Mexico. In Cuernavaca I went to Ivan Illich's school and I gave him $100 to pay for a month's tuition. ...And when you don't have any money that means that you don't travel too much, so I spent eight to ten hours a day studying Spanish. I was completely outside of the New York City element, city life and the tensions and problems it has, and outside of the Christian Brothers repressive atmosphere. I spent the month studying, ran out of money, went to an English-as-a-second-language school and I said that I could teach English as a second language. I taught well, I attracted a lot of students to the school. I was saving money, learning Spanish. I met a young woman down there whom I liked very much. Began researching "Ejido". You forget about time in Mexico. You don't realize the passing of the seasons. In December I had to leave and get my visa renewed. By that time I was wondering whether I would ever go back to the States. I guess I started to realize that I had better start working on the thesis. I cut down on my teaching and started to do a little more investigation on the master's essay.

So, armed with that study, I went back to Hunter College, talked to my advisor and she said, "Fine, write it up, it sounds fine, a great topic." So I did that and after many revisions it was approved, and I took my comprehensives and got my M.S. Decided at that point it was time to go back to Mexico and marry the woman whom I had been dating since September. I had known her for about a year and half before I married her.

When I had come back to New York this time I had no money, my teeth were bad, I needed dental attention. My parents gave me enough money to buy two suits. I still remember I got them at Robert Hall's, a brown suit for thirty dollars and a blue for forty dollars. With my new suit on I went to an employment agency in mid-Manhattan. I said, "I am bilingual and I have a degree in economics, I know a little accounting, so what can I do?" They said they had a job,credit analyst at a trust company. I had no idea what a credit analyst was. It sounded good. It was a job. So I went to the trust company and I cut my moustache a little and I put on my best clothes. I passed their aptitude test and they had a little math test and I passed that and Spanish. And they said, "We need someone in our credit department for international affairs,someone who speaks Spanish. The only thing is you have got to cut your moustache." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, it is a conservative institution." This is 1969, right?I had a woman for a boss. I hit it off all right with her and she didn't mention anything about the moustache, so I just trimmed it up a bit. Two weeks after I had set foot in Manhattan I had a job. I was getting paid one hundred and fifty dollars a week which I thought was great.

So I would go to work at nine in the morning and if you have ever worked at a bank, they want your body in there but they don't care too much about what you produce. You keep your desk kind of busy looking but not cluttered. I said, "Could you give me something more challenging to do? Writing these letters and these balances is high school work." And she said, "It is.' She said, "Ten years ago high school students were doing all the work in here." I said, "What has happened?" She said, "We have a lot more people with college degrees and they will take a job for the same salary." I knew that I was not going to stay there too long and I decided that it was time to make a move. I decided to quit the bank, and this time I had a fair amount of money saved. The bank thought I had done a great job. They gave me a beautiful letter of introduction for the same kind of job in Mexico.

I went down to Mexico to the Banco Commercial. By that time I was married. The bank said, "You can't work if you have a tourist visa." So I went to the government and they said, "Oh, you want to work here." And I said, "Yes, I want to have immigrant status." So they said, "You can't get immigrant status if you don't have a job." I said, "They just told me I can't get a job until I have immigrant status." The problem, they explained, was I had to get a letter from an employer saying that I was the only person in the world that could fill that particular spot. The bank said, no, they couldn't give me this letter because they can only hire a certain number of foreign people under this arrangement. So I went back to teaching English as a second language. My wife and I decided that we would open up our own school. There were no decent schools for secretarial students. My wife was the owner and was going to give me a job. That would satisfy the requirements of the immigration office. It was a going business, we lived off of it for six years. We paid bills, we made two trips to the United States with the family, and by that time we had four of us. I lived there a total of seven years.

We made another trip to New York in 1976. I figured that if I could find a job we would stay. If I found a job my wife could sell the school . It was a disaster in 1976; there was just no work for teachers. I started to doubt the American stereotype that anything is possible if you set your mind to it, I began to doubt that. I went to the unemployment office. I filled out all kinds of forms. I began getting desperate: "What are you going to do, how are you going to feed your children?" The department of unemployment security said, "You will have to go to the welfare office." They said, "You qualify, here is your first check for food stamps." They paid about $250 a month for the apartment. America is great. If it is not the land of opportunity, at least it is the land of trying to make everyone have an opportunity. I was happy to be able to support the family under those circumstances.

I kept looking for work. I took the F.B.I. exam, I took the civil service exam. Fortunately then the CETA program came through. I got a job with a Youth Board. I took that job, and there was no work to be done. I learned how to use a ten-key calculator; I just sat down and practiced. Someone would argue, create your own job. I tried that and the boss said, "Hey, don't do too much because you make us look bad."

I kept applying for jobs. In fact I was a full-time job-hunter. And finally I got a job in New Jersey. And I received my second career shock; my first was coming to America and going on welfare. The second was the job I had in New Jersey. I was offered a job in a small town, fairly good salary, teaching science and math at an open junior high. I was very naive; I read all the books on open education. I was just fascinated by it. The kids weren't really that interested. There were a lot of learning disabilities. The school had combined learning disabilities with special education kids. I didn't know anything about this. So I would be teaching there and a kid would pick up a chair and smash it down on top of his desk, or try to smash it on top of the kid next to him and then he would burst into tears. And I am going to prove right now I can do a good job in this school because I wanted to be rehired. You really want to do a good job after you have been on welfare for six months. But you do tend to lose your cool when kids come in and slam their books down and fight and throw things at you. To one kid I raised my hand. One day I had a slide show on. One kid named Johnson was supposed to operate the machine. He was running it backwards and forward. I asked another kid to take over. But Johnson wouldn't give up his job. So then I told him, "Damn it, get in your chair," and I raised my hand in a threatening fashion. Well, that was the end of the day, this was my last class. Another failure.

I joined this school in April; by the middle of May I got a note that said, "Doctor Smith wants to see you." So I went down to see Dr. Smith. I said, "What is the trouble?" He said, "Would you sit down? Well, we have a little story about Johnson." I said, "Yeah, that is true." So he said, "Okay, we wanted to confirm it." I said, "Fine." The next thing I know I got a letter from the superintendent saying, "You have just lost your employment, maybe you should look for work outside of the teaching profession." That is a big shock . That one letter . They gave me the rest of the year's salary which was about a month.

I got another job in Camden, New Jersey. Anyone who has ever been to Camden knows the uninhabited buildings, fire-destroyed, abandoned cars, poverty, unemployment. I worked in the worst section of Camden. This was September. I worked three weeks there and I tried all kinds of things, but I think I am too old, I know I would never have survived that job. The students were just too far away from opportunity, too hard for them, too hard for me. You couldn't get the kids to stop running and fighting in the halls.

I knew that I was not going to survive there, but I didn't know what was going to happen either. It was a time of great unemployment in the United States. During my job search I happened to meet a fellow in relation to a job in a northeast city. It was a very low-paying job. I was interested in it because it would get me out of Camden. But I decided that it was just too little money. I could not afford to move to that city. I turned his job down; he had my resume. Well, he heard about a job at this community college. They could not find anyone bilingual to teach secretarial and business subjects. This is probably the third week in September. The fellow on the phone said he had a job here, would I like to take it. "Yes, " I said, "Yes." I gave Camden two weeks notice. I flew up here, found a house, and I started working.

One of the subjects that I am teaching now is accounting. I took accounting at college. I am assuming that the students that I am teaching are at the same level that I was back in 1959, and they are not. Our students I would doubt are reading above the fifth grade. So what we do is we fail a large percentage of our students or we water down the course so much that they can't go on. After two years here they are supposed to graduate and they want to be accountants, and they won't be able to handle the courses that are at the state college, they won't be ready for them.

I also teach secretarial subjects. In the secretarial field there is a job for everyone; there are jobs now for secretaries that type thirty words a minute. You could do that after taking a two-week typing course. We are supposed to train them to be executive secretaries. An executive secretarial job is not something you can train someone for in two years. An executive secretary has to compose, has to be able to answer correspondence. Many students don't write well in English. Their main language or family language may be French or Spanish. It is going to be very difficult for that student to become an executive secretary in two years. You can't get experience here. They also need organizational ability . It is not the same to teach someone how to repair a computer that is broken as it is to teach them to be relaxed during the meeting so that you can take minutes of the meeting and type them up for everybody and have everybody have a copy by four o'clock. An executive secretary career is not made in the two-year community college.

I couldn't do the job myself, work as a secretary. I talked with a secretary a few days ago and I said, "How do you like your job now?" She kind of looked like one of these liberated women. "You must have a lot of opportunities to take initiative and use your managerial talent in the office." And she said, "No, that is not the case at all....We are servants, and the amount of paper work that we have to process is staggering. My boss wants me to do what I am asked to, and he is not interested in anything else. And, therefore, the people that are the happiest at secretarial work are the people that like to be told what to do and when to do it." And that is discouraging for a teacher of secretaries because no matter how much women's liberation liberates their psyches, they will remain tied to the typewriter. The word processing industry is trying to change that image without changing the fact. They talk about liberating the secretary and allowing her to be more creative. But in fact what the high speed word processor does is just let her process eight hours of work in two hours and take on another eight hours' load for the rest of the day.

I think that it is good that the female students have male teachers if they are going to be working in a world where their bosses will be men for the most part. I try to point out some of the problems that they have, and some of their problems are because they are women. They will be stereotyped as not ambitious, not taking initiative, and not eager to assume new responsibilities. I told them that if they want to break that stereotype they have to announce to the boss, "Look, I wasn't asked to do this and I am doing it," so the person knows that they are taking on new responsibilities. I try to make them aware of that.

The problem of a secretarial career is that it does not pay. The salaries that our students can make when they graduate they cannot live on , they cannot support their families on them. Many of our students are single heads of family with maybe two children. The starting salary has to be more than they are making on welfare or they won't be able to buy clothes they need to work. So I encourage them to do much more than the job description and to work much harder. But I also tell them that the only way to guarantee that all of them will get a raise is to go out on the street and demonstrate, you know, organize. Women will have to achieve or earn their raises by organization, in union activity. If I were given an opportunity to work at a reasonable salary with a labor organization in clerical workers, I would take it over teaching or over writing a grant or working on a proposal.

I come to work at eight-thirty and the students are there in the class. I have to teach a lesson in a way that my students who speak French will understand it. So I have to limit my vocabulary and I have to keep the audio-visuals at a maximum, use a lot of blackboard and try to involve the student in conversation. My Spanish-speaking students will try to ask me questions in Spanish, and then I will say, "Let's keep it in English so that everybody in the class knows what is going on." It becomes very difficult to teach in a traditional sense of "today we are going to do this, tomorrow your objective is this." What frequently happens is that you devise a program so that the students can progress individually on programmed learning. With some subjects that is not so hard; you can do it with typing. They are not supposed to call it typing today, we are all "keyboarders." You have a very broad range of abilities in the classroom. That is a real problem in every subject that I teach.

Another problem is the different responsibilities that the students have. A lot of our students cannot come to class every day. They have children, they are the only person that can take care of them. And when the children get sick, they have to stay home. A lot of them work: some of the students after they leave here go to work at a hospital, three to eleven at night. They come in the morning at nine-thirty and they are tired.

With typing, what I do is individualize it using audio-visual instructions. That reduces my role to that of a technician. I am there to make sure the machines are operating. There is very little teaching involved except for that once a week pep rally where I get them all in the room and hope that not too many are absent that day and try to get them enthusiastic about the subject matter. They work very well with it. I have seen students go from zero to sixty words a minute in one semester, and they are usually older students. They are usually the quieter students teachers traditionally like to have in their class because they work independently. My bilingual students do well in the shorthand, and I like the course. I think I teach it with more enthusiasm that I do the typing. The typing course is a mechanical skill, and I don't think I bring the same amount of enthusiasm to it as I do to the shorthand class.

Some of my students would be better advised to go to a skill training center where they would receive a salary and more intensive training in skills, whether it be electronics or typing and shorthand, and receive their terminal degrees there in a shorter period of time and get out and begin their careers as secretaries. Some of my other students would do better to go to a four-year college and work there. If I find the student is at a very low reading level in English, then I will try to take steps that will minimize that student's disability and also help the student to correct it.

My day is taken up in other activities than teaching. The accreditation committee takes up a lot of time, the meetings take up time, and reviewing documents that a department submits takes up a lot of time; editing documents takes a lot of time. Another area is preparing courses. So a lot of my work is not teaching, it is other things: buying new equipment, visiting work sites, where the students are, that is also a major part of my job. My days are sometimes very full; today, for example, I don't think I had five minutes to take a drink of water. I worked fourteen hours a day in Mexico. It was much more work and much less remuneration. But here the work is different and I am not completely independent as I was there. If I worked hard and was a success there it was my responsibility. Whereas here if I work hard, it may fail, and it is not my responsibility, it may be someone else's. But I feel as young, as enthusiastic as when I graduated from college. I don't feel that I am at the end of a rope or burned out.

I have the feeling that in other professions there is a definite career path . As a teacher here we don't have that and it is hard to put out maximum effort if it is not clear what are the rewards that you will be receiving, aside from the monetary reward of getting a weekly salary. If someone on the street or a friend whom I have not seen in a long time will ask me, "How is it going, what are you doing?What kind of job do you have? How are you doing in the job, are you getting promoted and going ahead?" Well, I have a lot of trouble responding to these questions. I stutter and stammer. It takes me a while to come out with, "I teach typing and shorthand." The truth is, my job is broader than that. But I don't find it worthy of devoting someone's life to . I have trouble when someone says, "What do you do?" I say I am at a community college and I teach secretarial skills and I always invariably add, accounting too, because I think accounting is a college-level course. A typing course is not college level. I am teaching skills but the skills are tools, they are not ends in themselves. I think I do a good job but I want to see something beyond that.

I have to look at myself and say, maybe I am looking for too much from this college, and I need to develop either another job for myself or look for a job that will absorb more of my energies. I can work here as much as I want, but it is volunteer work. I think I would feel much better about teaching at a high school than at a community college. Because typing and shorthand we assume traditionally to be high school subjects. It is very difficult to me to value my own job if the students can't take what I am giving and take it anywhere. The students we have, very few of them will get a position above the entry level, and it will take much longer and much greater effort on their part to become a word processing specialist or manager of an office or a supervisor. So if I were working at a tech college , for example, teaching in the court recording program, and were to see two of my students become court reporters and earn $20,000 to $25,000 after four years out, I could say, "Hey, I really did something for these people." Part of the problem may be indigenous to this community. It is an economically disadvantaged community and this maybe makes it hard for the students to achieve the kinds of goals that would maybe make the faculty and me in particular more satisfied with our positions.

One of the problems in working here is that there is very little peer support. The racial mixture of the faculty is a problem . There has been tension and there is very little peer support. One of the problems in teaching is there are a lot of petty things that go on. I don't think that this is all racial. I feel that if I were Black I would be a division chairperson. I haven't applied for division chairperson. They have to be advertised otherwise the people can't be hired but my application will be considered. I may even get the job, but what I have to offer will be screened through racial glasses.

I do feel that I am a minority as far as the opportunities that are available. I don't know how many times I have said to the dean of faculty, "I can do this job, but I don't want to volunteer for it. If I were appointed, I could handle it." I want to be asked to take the job. I was never encouraged; in fact they told me to stay away from it. So I never submitted an application to coordinate that committee. The NAACP and CORE and these other older institutions had too many white administrators or thinkers or social workers and leaders in their institutions and they want to stay away from that here, they don't want this school to be called the Black school run with white ideas.

What is the next step? What is this particular job, what is it going to help accomplish for me? Here I do whatever I can to help my students achieve their career ambitions. But when I am out running, I am saying, well, that is my job at the college, to help the students achieve their career ambitions. What is the college experience doing for me? That is a big question, the next step, the next step is not so apparent because of a couple of factors. One is that in education today there are not as many opportunities as there used to be. Another factor is that if I were to get out of education, it would require a major change in my lifestyle.

If I were offered the same position with the same salary at another school I would probably take it. I want to feel accepted and just like everyone else, liked and wanted. I feel that in this college they promote and want minority people to fill the positions for teaching, as well as the staff and administration. So that is a factor. I think that if you look around at the college you see that more of the administrative people who have been promoted within the college are minority. I am always given a very high evaluation by my students. But I do feel that the administration here wants people that are minority because they relate better to those people. I think I have a lot to offer to the college, and I think I am contributing ...maybe not as much as I can. The department head is the person who has been here the longest and I relate very well to her and the two women who were recently hired. I relate well to them, they ask me for help and I help them out as much as I can and I ask them for assistance when I need it. I feel very comfortable with the staff.

There is also the thing of the missionary complex. I guess at one point I was accused of that. You know the white people help and tell the Blacks what is good for them. I suppose there is a lot of that, "the white liberal." I am white and I am liberal, and I am here. So I guess that it is something that people expect to a certain extent, a do-gooder kind of thing. You are damned if you do and damned if you don't. If you are strong and take leadership, then people accuse you of being a missionary. And if you don't do anything they accuse you of not helping because you want to see them fall on their face. I remember the first time that I spoke about this with the president. He said, "Yes, every time I go into the bank and a person in front of me doesn't hold the door as I walk in, I think, did he do that because he is discourteous or because I am Black?" He said that this is something that he lives with twenty-four hours a day. I guess that is part of working with minorities--if someone does not hold the door open for me do I think are they discourteous or do they want to show me that I am not accepted--by letting the door close? So I am aware of that. It is a consideration.

I can see that I have to affirm my career. If I were at a bank I would not have that opportunity to go off and do something that I am interested in. So the lifestyle that I have I like and I want to keep it and teaching is the profession that gives me the most opportunity to be the way that I am. I think that if I had my druthers I would have a consultant business on the side. I am kind of a professional skeptic or doubter, incredulous. My wife thinks I should be working in a more prestigious institution. She comes from a very large family . They were an economically disadvantaged family. Money to her is very important. The nature of poverty is you don't have money, you think that people that have it have everything; her family they never had money so she thinks that it is important. And she would like to see me wear a three-piece suit. She thinks that I should be studying for a doctorate in administration .

Why am I here? I was hired because I speak Spanish and I can relate to these students. I think I understand their problems. I think that I can help them in learning the language and learning to get a job. I have been on welfare so I can speak positively about the welfare syndrome with people that are on it and feel ashamed about it, I can tell you that there is no reason to say I am on welfare and feel bad about it. I do feel that I have a lot to offer here and I don't think that I would be able to offer as much if I were working at Harvard. Maybe I can be more more productive working here than I could be in a white middle-class school. The prestige thing I couldn't care less about, having a new car or the three-piece suit. The dissatisfaction here is not being accepted or feeling that I am not accepted. What do I want? Well, I want recognition, to have someone say, "You did a good job."

Commentary

Linda Donovan wants more in her life. She has come to understand that in most work and social settings there is an elite group who have more control, more privilege, more opportunity, more advantages than she had growing up. She wants some of those advantages for herself and her children. Her work has become very important to her as an activity in itself but also as an avenue of opportunity for the things she wants . In many ways, even though she already has a four-year college degree and is working on a master's degree, what she wants more of is parallel to what her students in the community college also want: a sense of opportunity to participate in the American dream of upward mobility.

Social issues of ethnicity, class, gender, and occupational status interact with Linda Donovan's individual circumstances and character to strongly affect her sense of opportunity. Born of immigrant Italian parents, Donovan grew up in America before the Black power movement, with its insistence that Black was beautiful,influenced other ethnic groups to take pride in their heritage. She grew up feeling a stigma associated with being Italian. She took deeply to heart her dentist's telling her, when she was in seventh grade, that it was really too bad that such an attractive girl like her spoke less than perfect English.

Having established herself as an excellent student in her elementary school she was encouraged to enroll in a college preparatory curriculum in her parochial schools. But with little guidance from parents who really did not think of women as having careers and a limited sense of options provided by her high school, she thought of her future in terms of four conventional possibilities: she could be a nun, a nurse, a secretary, or a teacher. But even those possibilities were undermined by a sense that what a women really should do is get married and raise a family.

Her going to college amounted to a compromise. She did not want to go to work, and some of her friends were going to college. Her brief enthusiasm for going away to school was dampened by the promise of a car if she would go to the local college and live at home. Her first year of college was not the happiest. She was unclear about what she wanted to do, cut off from the fun of social life that comes from living on campus, and intimidated by the Jewish and Protestant students at her college, the likes of whom she had had very little contact with up to that point in her life. For the first time she was confronted with the realization that her family was not wealthy. She came up against a standard of living that was outside her experience and her knowledge.

The summer after her first year in college, she worked in a bank where a number of her high school friends were working. She looked at the type of work they were doing then, and would likely be doing in ten years, and she decided that it was not what she wanted for herself. She went back to school prepared to become a teacher, because of all the options she thought she had, it provided her with the sense of most challenge and opportunity.

Her life became more complicated when she decided to get married in her junior year and had a baby in her senior year. Finishing school, becoming a teacher, having a career, were in conflict with what her parents and husband felt was an appropriate role for a mother. But she finished school, typing her papers with her baby on her lap, and graduated proudly. Because the family needed the money, she overcame her husband's and parents' objections and took a part-time, evening-division job at the community college, teaching secretarial skills.

Her introduction to the community college on a part-time basis, as for many other community college faculty, turned into an opportunity to gain a full-time position in the secretarial department. She liked teaching in a college and working with older students and male and female colleagues. She gave up her simultaneous involvement in her sister's nursery school as she felt the possibilities and attractiveness of her work at the community college. At the same time she took her personal obligations to her family very seriously. Neither her children or husband would ever be disadvantaged by the fact that she was pursuing a career. She was determined not to fail. She was bucking a deeply embedded familial and ethnic notion of what the obligations of a woman were. and failure to meet those expectations would have been devastating. So she held two full-time jobs simultaneously, homemaker and community-college teacher.

She grew skillful and gained insight as a teacher. Among the courses she teaches is business math, and her comments about the math experience of her students are not dissimilar to those of Eugene Bowen, the math teacher whose profile we presented earlier. She adds, however, a layer of insight with her understanding of her students. She recognizes the correlation between social class, race, and success among her students at the community college. Students from wealthier families thrived in the college because they grew up with advantages in how their families lived, talked, and were accustomed to thinking and acting. Kids from average middle-class families survive in the college. Kids from deprived economic areas have a struggle on their hands, and for some of the Blacks, she thinks the deck may be stacked against them and that their situation is marked for failure. Her understanding does not detract from her efforts. She seems to accept the reality of the social structure in which she and her students operate, and does the best work she can.

In those areas in which she can take individual responsibility, in which her determination, ambition, energy and intelligence can count, she is successful . But there is an aspect of her work in the community college on which her individual attributes and actions have little effect and over which she has little control. She is a woman who has grown up in, and is now working in, a society and an institution (not unlike most institutions at all levels of higher education) that is deeply sexist.

That sexism affected her choice of work before she ever joined the faculty of a community college, and the same forces that operated to limit her sense of what her options were for a career now affect her sense of opportunity within the career she chose. From the start at her community college, without her really knowing it, she was being faced with a pervasive discriminatory attitude. In moving from part-time to full-time she was happy to get the position and trusted that she was being offered a reasonable salary. She did not know at the time that the man responsible for establishing her initial salary assumed , because she was a woman for whom this job meant a second income, that she did not need the salary that might be paid to a man with similar experience and credentials. The inequity of her original salary has had significant implications throughout the years because increases have been percentage raises. As a consequence, her low salary at the beginning results in her falling further and further behind the mean salary for faculty in her school.

Not only was she too trusting about her initial salary negotiations, she did not fully understand the place secretarial studies held in the hierarchy that can exist among faculties in a college. She applied for promotion. She was told that she could not be promoted without a master's degree, only to witness faculty in other departments, with no master's degree and no more experience than she, being promoted. She realized that other faculty might perceive her teaching secretarial courses of less import and worth than the courses they taught. Over time, she applied for an open position in the business department, and finally felt that she was beginning "to emerge as an equal in other peoples' eyes." Fortunately for her she was able to move up a notch in the subject-matter hierarchy; unfortunately for the secretarial field, the hierarchy in colleges parallels the occupational hierarchy, and secretarial faculty incur the concomitant costs of being near the bottom of the totem pole among faculty.

Being advised that she was not likely to be promoted without a master's degree, she pursued a master's in educational psychology. Her unhappiness with her graduate program can be understood because educational psychology was not what she really wanted to study. She was interested in psychology, but was prevented from continuing by the too few options afforded her in her undergraduate training in business education. The sense of options she had at an earlier point desert her as she tries to cope with the requirements for promotion. The field of education becomes an alternative for community college faculty that somehow does not match what they really want but is more accessible to them than the subject-matter field which would most closely match their interests.

Not only is she treated inequitably in such tangible matters as salary and rank, in other aspects of her working conditions she faces the consequences of sexism. In working on committees with male colleagues she learns that she has to be careful not to be too straightforward in recommending solutions to a problem. Her solution would be discarded only to reappear sometime later without her being acknowledged for her contribution. One of the reasons she was happy to give up working in a nursery school with her sister was that she enjoyed the company of her adult colleagues in the college. She learns that she cannot enjoy that company of male colleagues too much because of the innuendo that would develop if she went out to lunch with them or stopped in the local cocktail lounge on her way home from work. These frustrations add up to limit how she would really like to act and be. She chafes under the feeling that somehow she has to apologize for being a woman and must alter her actions accordingly.

She chafes because she likes being a woman, she likes dressing in a way that does not disguise her femininity, she likes to have fun, and she knows that if she acts the way that she likes to act she is likely not to be taken seriously . Yet she knows who she is. She knows the seriousness with which she thinks and understands. She knows that she is an important model for her students who may want to cut through the same stereotypic role assumptions that she faces. And yet her sense of power and opportunity, crucial to her effectiveness in work (Kanter 1977) is being stifled in her college . She resents a system that promises to solve the equity problem by an across-the-board remedy which does nothing to acknowledge the individual merit of her case. She is actively looking for opportunities outside the college which will give her the sense of power and opportunity that she wants from her work.

If she leaves the community college, the college will have lost the model of a woman who challenged factors of her upbringing that operated to keep her in her place. It is not that community colleges are any more or any less sexist than most institutions in higher education. We are confident that interviews of women faculty in four-year colleges and universities would offer accounts that parallel Linda Donovan's. But the additional weight Linda Donovan's story has for us, and the import of the anything-but-unique reflections of a sexist society in her community college,is that community colleges are meant to work with students so that they might move out of the place to which their ethnic, racial, or social class background works to consign them . They are meant to work with students to increase their skills and understanding so that they have more autonomy, opportunity, and power in their lives. If an institution which has been assigned this complicated task by society cannot cope with the complexities of sexist assumptions, attitudes, and actions among its faculty and administration, it is not likely to be able to do so for its students. In this case, as in others, the medium is much of the message.

Josephine Sanders teaches secretarial courses in a community college in Massachusetts. In her department and division women have established themselves, and power and opportunity seem more equitable for women than seems the case for Linda Donovan. Cautions must be taken about friendships with male faculty, and matters such as having lunch and having a drink with a male colleague draw attention for Sanders as they do for Donovan. But Sanders faces an additional set of constraints. Sanders was the first full-time Black faculty member in her college and to this day remains one of four Black faculty among a total faculty of approximately one hundred and fifty. As the first Black faculty member, and still as one of the very few Blacks, she faced and still faces the complexities of working in a context in which what she represents to her colleagues and students provides a constant tension to her being able to be seen and treated as an individual person.

Growing up in the rural South, Sanders early became color-conscious. Issues of jobs, money, type of work, and essential matters of dignity and respect became associated with race as she worked in the fields, watched white people interact with her grandparents, and, as a junior-high-school student, joined the civil rights movement. She became conscious of racial discrimination early, started fighting it early, and now, twenty years later, she has to continue to fight it in her work at the community college.

As the first full-time Black faculty member, Sanders has to prove herself to her students and colleagues. She has to justify the way she teaches, tests, and grades and she has to defend against second-guessing on the part of her division chairperson --which infringes on her sense of herself as a teacher. She works in a context in which students and colleagues feel little unease in questioning her qualifications and her good sense in a way that they would not do if she were white. She has to prove that her master's degree does not say on it that she is to teach Black students only. Working conditions she accepted readily at first, because she saw them as being a reflection of being the "new girl on the block", anger her six years later when she is no longer new nor a girl. She is still getting a schedule that spreads out her classes so that she has to arrive on campus early and leave late. She is still being assigned the "correcting" courses which require enormous amounts of work at home in the evening.

Like other faculty who are a "few among the many," (see Chapter 11) she has to work twice as hard, be twice as conscientious, in order not to be vulnerable to criticism. She seems to be in a position in which her good work--whether it be in coordinating a program for women to return to school and gain skills that will enable them to get jobs, or in trying to contribute to the development of programs through constructive committee work--is neither recognized nor supported. The result is that she is tired of fighting and is thinking about getting out. She has fought similar battles since she was a child and she sees that nothing has really changed.

Her story is a complicated one to present. It would be easy to portray her as a victim and her colleagues as racist and to thereby demean her, her colleagues, and her institution. The fact is that it is enormously difficult to be the first full-time Black faculty member on an overwhelmingly white faculty and to remain as one of the very few Black faculty over the course of years. It might have been easier for her if she chose to act the part of the accommodating and appreciative young woman who had a lot to learn from her senior white colleagues. But in fact she knew a lot, had an internalized sense of excellence, and felt that it would be cheating her students not to share that standard with them through her teaching. She could not play a role that would demean her sense of herself.

As the first Black faculty member in an essentially token situation, it would take a lot of talking, fighting, making mistakes, and working through problems, for her and her white colleagues to begin to understand the assumptions they are operating under, to go beyond them, and to become colleagues. The energy required to do that is enormous. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a single Black person to play such a role in a predominantly white faculty. As long as she remains so singular in the college, there is no real leverage on her white colleagues. The power situation that is inherent in the racial politics of tokenism does not provide an effective antithesis for assumptions and attitudes that are long and deeply held.

Furthermore, the leverage that in the sixties and early seventies was exerted at the national level has been vitiated. The white faculty in Sanders' community college are operating in a national context that no longer urges and mandates responsiveness, that no longer sets a moral temper which raises consciousness and provides through example, legislation, and regulation, incentives for going beyond tokenism. Sanders and her colleagues are operating in a setting in which affirmative action hangs on as a formal policy but which issues of economics, in combination with a backlash to the civil rights efforts of the sixties, have drained of its imperative (Jencks 1983). Within this larger context, Josephine Sanders and her colleagues are acting out a drama on a stage where the supporting cast, scenery, and lighting have all but vanished. What audience there is for such everyday matters in a secretarial department in a community college seems not to care too much about the outcome .

But like Linda Donovan's, Josephine Sanders' battles with her colleagues have import not only for her and her colleagues. The fact that she remains in a token situation and is losing the energy she needs to survive and thrive in the situation means that the assumptions and attitudes that characterize her colleagues' reaction to her as a Black may persist and prevail. While a Black colleague may be more threatening than minority students, and the analogy between the way Black faculty in token situations are treated and how minority students are treated cannot be total, the implications of Sanders' colleagues' attitudes and actions towards her for minority students are clear. If a Black colleague cannot be treated equitably, on what basis could we hope that the same white colleagues would be able to treat Black and other minority students equitably?

That issues of race and gender are problematic for community college faculty is not surprising and not unique to the community college. What is reflected in the experience of Donovan and Sanders could be found in other educational institutions . The issue is not that serious examples of racism and sexism can be found in community colleges; they can be found in every institution in the United States. The issue for us is the amount of looking away that takes place when the federal government , the higher educational establishment, and society in general, place the burden of providing equitable educational opportunity on an institution such as the community college which can be no better than the society of which it is a part.

Peter Lambert first started teaching in the sixties. The attitude abroad then was that problems were created by human beings and they could be solved by them. Social problems could be ameliorated and change could be made for the better. At the same time Lambert thought less of his own career and more of what he could contribute to the society around him. Now twenty years older, a white male, teaching in a field normally associated with women, in a community college with a predominantly minority student body and a commitment to minority leadership among its faculty and administration, Lambert's major question is no longer what can he contribute. Now he wonders what his work is doing for him.

The transformation in Lambert's outlook is a product of the changing times, his responsibilities as a husband and father, and most likely a host of other personal factors that accompany getting older. But beneath the question of what his job is doing for him and what is his next step is a problem that he is having affirming his work. That problem is closely related to the experience of both Donovan and Sanders. For in a reverse way, Lambert faces issues of worth connected to his work in the secretarial field and to the fact that as a white person working in a predominantly minority institution he feels a similar stifling of opportunity and power that Sanders and Donovan felt in their colleges.

Lambert is a skilled, deeply experienced person in his field. He has owned his own secretarial school, is bilingual, has a commitment to social progress, and has suffered travail enough in his own life to enable him to connect to the experience of his students in a way that reflects a genuine humility. Yet despite all that he has to offer and does offer his students, his colleagues and his college, he feels ambivalent about his work.

When friends and acquaintances ask him about his work, he hesitates when he says he teaches secretarial studies in a community college. He feels more comfortable when he emphasizes the business aspect of the course he teaches. He questions the appropriateness of secretarial studies in a community college where there is not enough time to bring his students' skills and understanding up to the level required of an executive secretary. He knows that a collegiate setting is not necessary to bring a student up to the minimum typing level required to get a job. He begins to feel that his efforts are futile when he reflects on the fact that if his students add in the cost of new clothes required to go to work, transportation costs, and other costs attendant to holding a job, for many of them the type of job they get may put them monetarily further behind than they are now being on welfare. His understanding of his field, his students and pedagogical issues, are acute. And yet he is not at a point where he is able to affirm his work.

What undermines his sense of himself in his work is not unlike that which undermined Sanders and Donovan. His sense of power and opportunity in the community college are limited by the fact that he is a white male teaching in a field predominantly associated with women. If men are in the secretarial field, they are normally in positions of leadership and power. But given the racial politics of Lambert's college, he would not even think of applying for the position of division chair since he knows that it is slotted to be held by a minority faculty member. He is willing to contribute his extensive skills to helping the college in its accreditation report: yet he has to restrain leadership and service initiatives lest he be perceived as carrying out a liberal-white-missionary role. His everyday life is spent in an environment in which he has to wonder whether the slights he perceives are real and racially motivated, or whether he is imagining things.

Like Donovan and Sanders, he feels he has a lot to offer that his college is not using. He recognizes that his discomfort with the lack of prestige he feels about his field and his college may well be a camouflage for the hurt he feels in not being recognized and accepted . What he wants is recognition and to be told that he is doing a good job.

Those are not unreasonable desires to express. Anybody in any field of study or teaching could say the same thing. But the desire for recognition and appreciation seems also to be reinforced by the complexities of teaching in the secretarial field. Its status as a field of teaching is comparable to its status as an occupation. The fact that it is an occupation mainly held by women allows its faculty to be treated with less seriousness. Because it is a field that has been primarily staffed by women, the underlying intelligence, skill, and contribution of secretaries is misperceived and underrated. Despite women's liberation, the work of secretaries is still perceived to be akin to the work of a servant. Teachers in the secretarial field cannot expect to be recognized for who they are and what they can do in a way different from how the workers they are preparing will be recognized in their jobs. Even the "high-technifying" of secretarial work does not promise to challenge the basic assumptions underlying the secretarial field. As Lambert makes clear, word processors allow the secretary to get more work done in the course of the day, to be more productive for the business, but do not promise to affect the basic relationships of boss, secretary, and organization.

The basic relationships of the secretarial field are mirrored in secretarial departments in community colleges. When to those patterns are added even broader concerns of organizational sexism and racism, the result is that the community college teachers we have presented in this chapter feel that their own sense of power and opportunity is blocked. Donovan, Sanders, and Lambert are people with high standards of excellence, deep commitment to what they are doing, and lives that push up against conventional notions of what is appropriate for them given their gender, social class, and race. To the extent that people like them feel stifled in the community colleges in which they work, students, and everybody involved stands to lose.

Chapter Eight

The Road not Taken: The Work of Nursing and Dental Hygiene Faculty

Introduction to the Profiles

This chapter presents the profiles of two women who teach in nursing programs in community colleges and a vignette of a woman who teaches in a dental hygiene program. One of the nursing faculty, Roberta DeVane, teaches in a community college in a small town in Massachusetts and the other, Mary Winsted, teaches in a community college in a large metropolitan area of California. The considerable overlap in their stories illustrates the impact of the professional field of nursing as it interacts with the structure of community colleges. Nursing as a health- and science-related occupation carries with it its own developing professional identity and has behind it the profession of medicine. It carries sufficient weight, backed by state regulatory agencies, to force the community college structure to adapt to its requirements rather than vice versa. It is also an occupation which, while filled by women, carries with it a measure of respect and status above that of the secretarial field. DeVane's and Winsted's profiles reflect these basic occupational characteristics.

Marilyn Norris's vignette reflects the reality of working in a health-related field lower in the hierarchy than nursing and also dominated by women. While her work shares certain characteristics with that of faculty in nursing, her vignette highlights differences that are not unrelated to the relative status of medicine and nursing and dentistry and dental hygienists.

Profile

ROBERTA DEVANE

(Roberta DeVane, a woman in her forties, teaches nursing at a rural community college in Massachusetts. We interviewed her twice in her office and once at her home in the spring of 1982.)

I am the oldest of four children. My parents were both high school educated but not college educated. My mother did complete some sort of a nursing program . From the time I was little all I ever thought about was being a nurse. My whole education in high school was kind of geared toward what I had to take to get into nursing, because that's the only thing that I ever wanted to do. Mom never worked as a nurse from the time I was born and never went back to it. I never had that influence of her coming home in a white uniform.

My mother took care of children for awhile; she'd board them during the week and they would go home for the weekend. I can remember one day my mother left to take us to school and we discovered we were missing one still out in the sandbox. Mom and Dad were involved in a lot of things, my dad in church activities. I think I learned to give to other people and be helping towards other people and, of course, nursing is a very helping sort of profession to be in. I found out what they needed over here at this hospital, what they required to get into nursing. I arranged my whole high school career so that I would get into the program over here. I had no thoughts of going anyplace but local because I couldn't bear the thought of possibly going off fifty miles from home, I mean that was too much for me. As I look back at it, I did not get much counseling in high school. That bothers me that many high school counselors don't know about nursing programs, still. My only feeling was I wanted to be a nurse and I wanted to be a bedside nurse, so I got into a three-year program.

I was born in 1938. I can remember the blackouts in World War II. I can remember the day the war ended. My dad was janitor and still is janitor at our church and his job was always to ring the church bell, so I can remember on V-Day Dad was out there ringing that church bell. My father and mother both grew up here. This is my area. I'm one of these people that stuck in one spot and has never been any other place.

My grandmother and grandfather on my father's side lived in the same town. They had eleven children. Every Christmas they all came together at my grandfolks' house and all the children would come with all their children. Grandma was part Indian and that's where my high cheekbones come from. Grandpa kind of ruled the roost and the household. He died when I was in training. I can remember the first time I had worn my RN nurse's cap I was taking care of my grandmother when she died.

My mother was one of five and they all live in the area too. My grandfather had a farm with cows and I used to go up there and watch him milk the cows, and I'd climb in the silo and see the pigs and go out and gather eggs. I'm the oldest granddaughter on both sides and, being a nurse, my grandfolks kind of looked to me to take care of a lot of their problems.

For years we didn't have a car so we walked places. Or we borrowed my grandfather's truck, the old produce truck, and we used to ride in the back between the vegetable bins. And Dad never missed church and Dad still never misses church. He always took us and as the kids came along we used to pull them in wagons down to church and Sunday school. My grandfather was a deacon there for many years, my father is a deacon there, both my grandmothers were clerks there, and I've been the clerk there for almost twenty years now. The minute that I got into high school I was nabbed to be a Sunday school teacher.

I can remember the elementary school building and I can remember being made to sit there with my arms behind my back kind of at attention. I don't ever remember not liking school. I was very upset if I got a poor grade, (a poor grade was less than a B). I was a little goody-goody, never got into trouble in school. I tried very hard to please people and so therefore if the kids were doing something wrong I wouldn't get involved in it. This first-grade teacher used to go around with a ruler and every once in a while let a little kid have it across the knuckles. I just thought that's the way school was and I didn't really think of it as being too severe.

I remember Mom talking to us later about when my dad worked on the truck, how little money he made, and how getting a job in a factory really helped his income. Dad always took care of the bills, Dad always did the shopping.It seemed like I was always the one to wash the dishes. One brother comes along and he wipes and I still wash, and then the sister comes along and I wash and she wipes. And I can remember having to get lunch for I don't remember how many kids,and trying to keep track of all these kids making sure they were all right. My mom went from boarding them during the week and then she gradually started day care. I kind of saw myself as mother you see, as taking care of all these little kids. I can remember being shocked one day because my youngest brother looked up at my mother and said, "When's my mother going to come get me?" All of a sudden this child thinks, "Maybe I have a mother some place that is supposed to come get me too."

I guess I started having trouble with math in the seventh grade and that was a big problem for me because I pulled a C in math. That was degrading to me that I should get a C. Then when I got into ninth grade we had algebra which was difficult for me, mainly because the principal taught the course and he was out of the room more than he was in the room. So it presented a lot of problems when I got into high school. Math has always been a problem for me.

It was a good high school. We had some super teachers. I was in the college course. We had some good students in those classes and students that I didn't see acting up like they used to in our hometown school. City kids. And they didn't include us in too much because we couldn't stay for a lot of the activities. We had to get the bus to go back home. But I did get involved in some of the clubs, maybe because I was involved with college course kids. I needed two years of math, I needed chemistry, I needed two years of a language to get into nursing school at that time. It's not a requirement now in a lot of places but it was at the time and the only way that I could get these was to be in the college course. I had had one year of typing and I wanted badly to take a second year. They wouldn't let me take it because I was in the college course and they only offered it to the commercial kids. The only courses I took were college-bound courses and there was a lot of competition. I had to work hard, it wasn't easy. But I was pretty much up there at the top. I got involved with the French club for a while because I was taking French.

At graduation I got an award for being the outstanding student. Which kind of shocked me because I didn't even know the thing existed. That was a big surprise at graduation. Then there was an award for students going into nursing and I knew ahead of time I was getting that. I remember the stage being full of people and I'm trying to remember how many of us graduated, one hundred and eighty, something like that. It was a big class; in fact when we got to graduation rehearsal I saw students that I didn't even know were in my class. I remember being very excited to be through but very scared. Thinking all of a sudden, here I am, now I'm out on my own and all that protection from school is gone. There is going to be a lot of pressure put on me and you know all of a sudden I'm going to be out there working; I can remember feeling glad to graduate but scared. I can remember going over for my interview for nursing school and feeling good when I got the paper in my hand, that indeed they were going to take me. I don't know what I would have done if I had not been accepted, I really don't.

Good old doctor. He lived right down behind us, you could throw a stone and hit his house. He had delivered all of us and had always taken care of us so when he heard that I was interested in nursing he really thought that was super. And I knew he worked here and so that I wouldn't be going in completely cold, I knew one doctor. He gave me a few boosts to the local hospital and I was accepted there without any problems because my grades were good in high school. At that time, if you could believe it, our tuition was fifty dollars for three years in nursing. We had to buy our uniforms and our books. My high school award paid my tuition through school. At that time the three-year program served a good purpose. They provided a lot of services for the hospital. The hospital couldn't have survived without us. They used us for service; it was not really, as I look back at it, a good education. It really scares me as I think of the responsibilities they used to give me in taking care of patients when I really wasn't adequately prepared for it. And then if you did something wrong in the clinical area they could ground you for the weekend. You could not leave the nurses' home, you had to stay there. All these controls they put on my life--I just took it for granted I had to put up with it and this is the way nursing was.

I remember being in charge of a ward one evening [when I was in nursing school.] We had close to thirty patients and I was in charge. A woman came in that night who was hemorrhaging. I think she aborted and in the middle of all of this the supervisor coming in and sitting me down and giving me holy hell because of the way I had made out my assignment. I remember when I was a freshman taking care of very difficult patients, having to leave at eleven or twelve o'clock to go to class. We covered the emergency room so we would get called from the nurses' home to come over and cover. We didn't know where things were half the time. A doctor asked me for a tube of ointment one night and I did not recognize the name. I couldn't find it in the usual box and so the supervisor was there and I said to her, "I can't find it." She says, "Well I'm sick of having to wait on you students, just find it yourself." He evidently gave me the trade or generic name and the tube was labeled a different way and I just didn't recognize the tube. I remember working all day in the diet kitchen getting called about ten or eleven o'clock at night to go over and special a child who had had a tracheotomy done that day. I hadn't even had my pediatrics experience, knew nothing about taking care of sick children, never mind a kid who had just had a trach. Getting off duty at seven and having to go back down to the diet kitchen to work again with no sleep. They say good old three-year programs--no, thank you. I don't call that education. I call it slave labor. We had classes taught by nurses. We had quite a few classes taught by doctors. Physicians teaching nurses, which is something that we just don't do any more. A lot of times very much over our heads. They were not teachers. They were just doctors telling us what maternity nursing was supposed to be all about. They obviously didn't know nursing care. And you know, you would be working all night and then they would pull you out of bed to go down for your class with this doctor; I mean like you could stay awake and understand what they were saying.

We probably started with close to forty students and we graduated twenty-five. The attrition rate in nursing is usually pretty high. A lot of students come into it with a lot of expectations. Things just aren't that way. I can remember seeing classmates drop out, people being asked to leave. We lived together on the same floor and we were good friends and did things together and went places together and all of a sudden the students disappear on us, classmates. I didn't like that. I suppose the threat was always there, that it could be you next.

For the state examination you have to have a statement from the school that you graduated and passed the course there and then the state board sets up examinations given to all nursing graduates. A series of five, one test for each area, one in maternity, pediatrics, psychiatric nursing, medical nursing, surgical nursing. Two-day testing. Very threatening. You've got all these people up there monitoring you. Having to check in at the door with your picture to make sure that it is you. And just sitting there thinking, "My whole career depends on this exam. If I don't pass it what am I going to do?" It's a difficult spot to be in. Every nursing student feels that way I think.

But you know we managed to get through despite all the things they did to us and when I graduated all I wanted to do was go right into nursing work. And at graduation they used to give an award to one girl from each school in the district, all the hospital schools of nursing, for the outstanding student. This year they decided they would give it to one student from the whole district so it would be a bigger award. I happened to get it. So here I was with this money in hand, thinking, now these nice people gave me this money and this honor and what do I do with it? I thought, well, I'll go and take a course at the university.

I started taking my courses down there and I got into it, I liked it, and I thought, gee, maybe I should continue on. So while I was working part-time I was going to school. It took me six more years to get my bachelor's . I would work all day, go to class four to six, seven to nine at night. I just couldn't afford to go full-time, I couldn't afford to not work. Now there are all sorts of places where nurses can go, but at that time that was all there was. When I started getting into school and finding out all I didn't know, I decided I'd better continue with this. But it hit me one day what they had done to me down there. It was a very subtle change: a change in my behavior and my understanding of people, my understanding of what my job was as a nurse that I had never learned in the basic program because it was so technique-oriented that we really didn't get into interpersonal relationships, like how to talk to a patient, how to include a family. I could see the benefits of the education that I had gone through. For a while I used to sit in the class and say, "Oh, what are we learning this for, this has got nothing to do with nursing." All of a sudden it all kind of came together. I could see the change in myself because up till that time I kind of kept to myself and if I had to get up in front of a group it was the last thing in the world I would ever do, that was horrendous for me. Those gradual sorts of changes, all of a sudden they go together and you realize you are looking at things a lot differently. I graduated in 1959 from nursing school. I started right in at the university that fall and graduated in 1965. I got married in 1961.

In high school my English teacher said to me one day in class, "It's a good thing you are going into nursing because you'd never make it through college," and that really devastated me. I don't know why to this day that he made that statement to me. I can remember that really really bothering me, like gee, I must be kind of dumb or something, and I was doing all right in his class. It's probably the only statement I can remember verbatim, because it really bothered me. And still does. Maybe that's a little bit of why I hesitated about going on to school because I always had that in my background, you know, maybe I'm not quite good enough to make it through this program. Maybe I am indeed going to fail, maybe I can't pass those graduate record exams. But I fooled him.

I met my husband when I was a second-year nursing student. That was in 1957. We went out for four years and then we got married in 1961. My parents were very very upset, terribly upset. They felt he wasn't good enough for me, he didn't have the education that I had, and he was French, he was Catholic. And of course his family wouldn't come to my wedding because he was being married outside the church, so we were kind of on our own. Now we get along fine with both sides, but back in 1961 things were a lot different. He kind of pushed me through school. He gave me a lot of encouragement and never resented my going to school. It made it hard the first few years we were married because, you know, it seemed like every time you turned around you were paying for books or tuition again and neither one of us was making very much money, but he said, "If you can do it, you go to it." And I've seen a lot of wives that have a lot of trouble with husbands that don't want them to continue on.

If you are going to do teaching in a community college they require a master's degree although we do sometimes have instructors come in with bachelor's degrees. I worked out of the state hospital teaching the LPN program for about five years and I had thought about going on for my graduate degree . So when the university opened up, that gave me a good opportunity . A lot of nurses will go on in education or public health, but then you have trouble picking up a job because people are looking for a master's in nursing. Just about the time I graduated I found out I was pregnant. I decided I better stay home for a while. I was going to stay home until my children were in school and about the time the baby was six months old I decided I'd had it. After working nine years, to stay home and take care of a family and a home--it's not that I didn't enjoy them, but it just seemed like I was getting nowhere. So I went back to work nights.

In 1973 I came to work here at the community college part-time nights . And in the meantime the fellow that was our chairman up until last year called me and asked me if I would be interested in being on the advisory board for the nursing program that they were starting here. I came on the advisory board and then of course he kept badgering me, "Why don't you come on the faculty?" I didn't know that much about Associate Degree programs. I was familiar with all the other programs in nursing because I had taught in every program. I taught in practical nursing, diploma program, and in my graduate experience I had some teaching experience with four-year students. Two-year was kind of new to me. Of course it was in my community , it was handy, I knew they would be using the hospital over here so I didn't have to worry about traveling.

I got a taste of teaching. I was going to stay in it and if I was going to stay in it, I was going to need my master's if I was going to do anything besides teaching the practical nursing program, which I knew I really didn't want. It is hard to teach practical nursing programs because they are on such a superficial level. But I enjoyed the students. I realized how much I enjoyed working with students and it was really rewarding to be able to show them how to do something or give them an exam and have them come through with a good grade and see these people graduate that for years hadn't had any educational background, hadn't had any job. In the practical nursing program I got a lot of these middle-aged women, older women coming in and they really felt good about what they were doing, so that was kind of fulfilling. But I felt I needed something that was a little bit deeper than that. I had learned so much in my bachelor's program that I wanted to share all that good information.

We had to start right at the bottom here because the program hadn't really been developed. I remember coming up here and dumping all these boxes of all this material that I had and looking at it and saying, "This isn't any good, I've got to start all over again." I remember feeling like, Oh my God I don't know if I can do this. Having to develop a syllabus which was not part of diploma or pratical nursing programs. Trying to write objectives down.

It was just that I couldn't get up and talk about things that I was familiar with any more. These students are very bright students --one of the problems I guess I recognized early was that their anatomy-physiology background was super. My A and P had been fifteen years before. Feeling very rusty and having these kids in class who are right on the ball, I guess you know initially I was not quite used to the idea that I didn't have to know everything in order to teach. The class was so diverse. I had men in the class, I had people that were older than myself in the class, I had people that I knew well from the community. And a more informal attitude coming from the students but yet very highly motivated, highly educated students that were constantly asking questions. Until I got comfortable with what I knew and what I didn't know and what I could find out, that was kind of threatening in the beginning I think.

Also working in a college. When I came in I had this feeling that, you know, I was just a nurse and therefore I wasn't quite as good as the rest of the people that taught here because they were English professors, they were college professors. They had their master's. I had a master's but for some reason it took me awhile to get used to the idea I'm just as good as they are, I've got a master's degree. I've got a lot of years of experience in nursing. You constantly have to change your outlines, your syllabus, because medicine changes. But it took me a while to come to that realization. I didn't want to talk in faculty meetings. I just kind of did my job and I really didn't feel a part of the college at all. That's changed over the years.

I guess once I opened my mouth in faculty meetings I found out that I could say something and I do know something. But it's hard as a nursing faculty here to get involved in a lot of things that are going on in the college because our clinical time takes us away from the place so much of the time. I'm only here on campus two days a week. Plus, we are responsible to the state board of nursing; we are responsible to the national league of nursing as well as the college. Other faculty members don't have that kind of responsibility so it seems we are always involved in paper work that a lot of the rest of the faculty don't have to get involved in. You always feel like you have somebody hanging over your shoulder to check on what you are doing.

I enjoy getting up in front of the students now and they don't threaten me anymore. If I don't know something, I'll say I don't know it, I'll have to find out for you. Before I got all embarrassed. The last few years I've had the same group for two days on Tuesday and Wednesday. I take the same group of ten students into medical surgical nursing. I put on my uniform and I go into the hospital and assign them patients to take care of and I supervise them. You are right there with them as much as you can. When you get ten students in a clinical area it's a big responsibility. There are four clinical instructors all doing the same thing. So we group them into four groups.

It seems like they're my own children at this point because I've had them for a semester and a half, the same group of ten students. I know how many children they have, what it's like for them at home, what problems they are facing where they work. You know at coffee break you learn a lot of things about your students. You really get to know them well.

That gets to be a problem sometimes when you have to fail them. I've had one just about every year I guess. The most recent one was a married woman, probably a little bit younger than I am, several children, very much wanted to be a nurse, and when we discovered that she had failed her final a second time, we knew that we had to fail her. This was just before Christmas time. I called her into my office and I said, "You know you failed both exams and there really is no way we can pass you." And she of course started to fill up and she started to get up and leave, and I said, "No, sit down." I said, "You know, this isn't the end of the world. I know it's devastating to be told that you are not going to be able to come back, but I really think you can do with repeating a semester and trying it again." And she said, "I just can't do that." And I said, "Well, right now I know that it looks like you can't do it." I said, "You go home and give it some thought and after you get over the shock maybe you'll think again about it and you might be willing to come back." You know I just felt myself filling up because I felt so badly for her. She said, "I've blown everything." And I said, "No, you haven't. Your goal is to finish nursing, but you know sometimes things get in our way and we can't accomplish it in the time that we would like to, but that doesn't mean that you can't accomplish it at some later date." She is coming back. I felt so badly for her but yet I've got a responsibility to my profession and I've got a responsibility to patients out there and if she is not capable of doing it, I have to fail her. And that's a very hard thing. They really have to work hard to get through the program. And when they have got families at home and they have trouble with studies--it was just kind of overwhelming to her. First year isn't so difficult for them. The sciences are hard, but nursing is not that hard. But medical surgical nursing is difficult, terribly difficult.

I have very little to do with the first-year program. We have faculty meetings together so we know what's going on but we really don't know the students and we don't take part in the planning . When I was at the state college I found the nursing faculty were very much professionals. Nursing was their whole life. They went to meetings at night, they worked all day and most of them weren't married and nursing was their thing. And they had very little understanding of what it was like to be a faculty member with small children at home and have other responsibilities. Here everybody has families. They are very concerned about your children and if something happens at home they understand. And we tend to be the same way with our students. I remember at the university having a faculty member whose whole thing was devoted to nursing and that came in conflict with what my philosophy of life is. I mean I feel that my family comes first and my job comes second and she just felt that we should reverse that. One thing I like about the community college, I find this faculty more community oriented, more family oriented, and yes, they enjoy their teaching but they also enjoy being part of a family.

In terms of the nursing itself, clinically, you have to write evaluations on students periodically, which involves a lot of work, and then see all those students individually, going over their evaluations with them. Making up exams is one of the worst jobs, one I don't like at all, because we go mostly with multiple choice exams and those are difficult to make up so that the student can understand what you are asking. There are nursing faculty meetings all the time trying to revise philosophies, revise objectives, and revise syllabus; trying to read some of the current material so that you keep up to date; trying to attend seminars that focus in on certain conditions so that you get updated from specialists so that you can pass new information on to students. We are supposed to keep five office hours during the week, which kind of gets to most of us. As nursing faculty we put in an awful lot of hours anyway and we see students all the time and I can almost say, except for maybe two to three students that are out of our program, that no students ever come see me during my office hours.

We have to be part of some standing committees. Each year we choose which committee we want to be on. I was on the admission committee for this year. We have to review students that are applying for the program and make some decisions about whom we are going to admit . You've got somebody's life in your hands because they want to come into nursing and you are saying yes or no. Somebody has got to make the decisions, I realize , but I don't like doing that. A few years ago we used to interview every student that applied. We had two hundred and ten applicants this year and we only had fifty spots. Seeing all those students would tie you up half a semester . Then we decided we would do it through an admission committee. We look through these folders and admit people, put other people on the waiting list, tell others that they should take some sciences so we can see how well they do.

I was on the professional education development committee for a while trying to plan some programs for inservice for our faculty. The faculty, if you plan a program, all moan and groan about having to come. No matter what you plan somebody is unhappy with it. As a nursing faculty I know what I need but that often has no bearing at all on the rest of the faculty here.

We have to have so many advisees. I have students mostly in the nursing program that I'm an advisor to, but I also have two students right now who are out of nursing. They have a hard time catching up with me because I'm not here the times they are here. If we were involved in so many hours of community activities, they used to give us a credit for these. Which I thought originally was one of the purposes of a community college, to get involved in the community so that we are known out there. We used to get a little bit of recognition for it. Now we don't.

We go down and eat lunch and if there are several nursing faculty sitting at a table somebody will come by and they'll say, "Is this a meeting, can I join?" It's almost like, "Maybe I shouldn't intrude on them." Often times they will say, "Boy, people really have to work hard in that program ." The state says that the ideal ratio in a clinical area is one instructor to ten students and so therefore we have more faculty per student body than the rest of the school and some of the faculty for a while were a little bit resentful of that. The nursing program started after the college was started so it was new to a lot of people. They weren't aware of nursing programs, what they were like, what they entailed, and I think through the years they have become more knowledgeable of what goes on.

As a teacher I've gotten to the point where I don't have to rely too much on my lecture notes. I can pretty well get up and talk on what I know. I have a syllabus and I try to stay with it because the students I find do better if they have something that they know how to study from. I tend to tell a lot of stories because I've got a lot of stories from my past about things that have happened in nursing. In a large group you really can't discuss too much, it's mostly lecture. You ask a few questions to get them to thinking. A lot of the discussion comes in the clinical conferences. Each day when we end clinical experiences they have an hour of clinical conference and we sit down and discuss what's happened during the day, what they learned about their patients, what went on. It's a wrap-up sort of thing. So we get a lot of discussion in there that we can't get in class.

In this class we have thirty-four students and two of them are male. We have two men on the nursing faculty and five women. That's unusual to have male nursing faculty and we have had two right from the beginning which is, I think, great for our male students. I've had one fellow in my group for most of the year. It's hard talking in class because you keep referring to the nurse as "she" and you have to catch yourself because he's in the class. All the textbooks are written with "she" in them. It is still very noticeably a woman's career and it's difficult with patients too. Patients, if they see one of my male students, right away assume that they are a doctor. I very rarely assign my male students to take care of a female patient which is ironic because female students are always taking care of male patients. One day I was really kind of hard pressed and I said to one of my male students, "Oh, would you mind, how would you feel about taking care of a female patient today?" "Oh, I don't care," he said. So he took care of her the first day and the second day before he came in she said to the team leader, "I had the nicest doctor taking care of me yesterday." I've had patients say to me, "Why are you supervising that doctor giving medications?"

It's particularly hard in this area dealing with doctors because they have been around for years, they are mostly of the old school, many of them still with the idea that nurses are to do what they are told to do and they are not to think. And we are trying to educate nursing students to use a lot of judgment and question, without getting the doctor's back up against them. You know we are guests in the hospital for one thing. You really have to be careful how you go about what you are trying to accomplish. But I do try to teach the students that they need to question, that they need to find out what's going on, they need to learn tact in getting their message across. Because they have to be a patient advocate. And if you can't deal with a doctor then you are never going to be an advocate for your patient. The whole area of nurse-doctor relationships is pretty tight right now. And that's been a hard thing for me to change to because, in the era from which I came, if a doctor came on the ward you stood up and you gave him your chair, you opened the door for the doctor. A doctor came into class and you all stood up, and you didn't dare speak to a doctor unless he spoke to you. You know I still have trouble sometimes speaking out to a doctor and standing up for what I think is right, and yet I have to teach my students that, so it can be a battle some days.

Nursing has become more of a separate profession than it was years ago. Years ago it was follow the doctor's orders and that was your job. And you didn't do too much thinking on your own. You just did the procedures and you gave the bath and you gave the medications the doctor ordered. Now nurses are being taught a lot of things that we weren't taught before. Assessment of patient needs, assessment of symptoms, and looking at what the drugs are doing to the patient. Nurses are more highly educated than they were years ago. We were very functional oriented; now it's more teaching a student to look at the patient and make some decisions on their own. Years ago we never could tell a patient what they got for medication. Now we go in with a pill and say, "This is your heart pill," and we tell them what to expect for side effects and if they want to know their blood pressure we tell them what it is. We do a lot of teaching which we didn't do years ago.

So nursing is really changed remarkably since I was a student. For the better. We are not just robots that walk along and follow what the doctor orders. And we don't look at doctors as gods like I used to. For instance, up at the hospital where I am , a patient was most distraught because the doctor had not been in for four days to see her. I know that's wrong. If that doctor doesn't visit for four days, he is negligent. If I was a nurse on the floor, I think I would get on the phone and say, "You should come over and see this patient." But I don't have the clout as a guest in a hospital to get after a doctor for something that I feel they are negligent about. I say to my students, "You know that it's not right, he should be here. If you were in the position as a staff nurse, what would you do about it?"

Back a couple of years ago when I was over here at this hospital there was one doctor over there that was always hollering and screaming at the nurses. I feel it is very degrading. I went down to the emergency room one day. They needed some help and so I went down with the stretcher and I bring the patient out and I hear this doctor hollering at somebody and I didn't pay too much attention to it because I was doing my thing and all of a sudden I realized he was looking at me. And he said, "The next time blah, blah, blah," and he goes on and on. About fifteen minutes later he comes up on the ward and I got him down by the elevator door and nobody else could hear. And I said, "You know, doctor," I said, "I really don't appreciate being hollered at." And he said, "I didn't holler at you." I said, "Yes you did." He says, "Well, I was trying to get your attention." I said, "Well I've got a name and if you want something just talk to me and I'll find out what you need." And he never gave me any trouble after that. I was shaking in my boots, because I had never confronted a doctor like that. I'm just as much a professional as he is. We are in different fields, but he doesn't need to speak to me that way.

In a bigger hospital you are working more with a team sort of thing. There is a real difference in a small hospital between the nurse and the doctor. They don't work together. In a medical center they work together as a team and everybody's knowledgeable in their areas and they respect the person for their knowledge. I respect the doctors for what they know. I think they just get very careless with their care. And I'm very much concerned about my patients and I want them to get the best.

The hospitals accept us in to have our clinical experience there. We do not pay for that at all. They are ultimately responsible for their patients' care so they have the right to say, "We don't want your students here anymore." You are not employed by the hospital, you are a guest there. You do give a lot of help but, on the other hand, they are ultimately responsible for those patients. If something happens to the patient, the patient is going to turn around and sue the hospital and probably not the student. Some enjoy the students and really enjoy having them there and others, they are in the way, and they'd rather that they weren't there; but they'll comply with what the administration wants and keep us. It's a lot of responsibility. If they weren't as good students as they are, it would be even more stressful. But they are pretty responsible and the rapport between the students and myself is very good.

Yesterday was our last clinical day. One student came up to me and she said, "Today's my last clinical day and pretty soon I'm going to be out there on my own. What am I going to do when I can't say,' Roberta could you come and help me?'" She said, "I feel like my umbilical cord is being cut." Every year when I lose my students, I feel like a piece of me has gone because I have invested so much energy in their education.

We talk a lot in conference with students about the importance of going on for school, that this is okay for now and it will serve your purpose right now and if that's all you want then that's okay. But the time is coming when they are going to say, "You need your bachelor's degree in order to be a professional nurse." To some you say, "Don't start school right away, get some nursing experience first so you have got your feet on the floor a little bit." Others that have some nursing experience behind them, because they are already licensed practical nurses, they show some leadership ability, they are very mature, they are very independent with their work; then if they say they are going to school, "Great. Take some courses and get involved and I know right now you don't want to go back full-time, but you know another year or so you'll sort of be itching to go back." I find myself encouraging them to go on and get their bachelor's, because I know it's coming to that.

I've been sitting in the same position for nine years with no promotion. I've been recommended for promotion every year since I've gotten here but because there are no positions to put me in, I just don't get it. Every year I apply but I think one of the problems that I have as a nursing faculty member is that because I am so tied up outside the college with clinical I don't have really a good opportunity to give much of a contribution in terms of some of the committees. And that counts very heavily it seems. I guess it's that old thing: we still feel kind of separate from the rest of the faculty because our job is just so different. We just don't get a chance to even attend some of the committee meetings that we are supposed to attend. We just can't do it. It's hard to feel yourself a total part of the faculty. It's kind of unique to nursing, I think.

We are a terminal sort of program as opposed to a lot of others that are maybe transfer programs or liberal arts where the students are not quite sure what they want to do. It's kind of like taking the old hospital program and trying to slot it into a community college but not quite being able to do that because the kids spend much more time in their nursing classes than any other students in the college. You know it's kind of nice being part of a college setting, too, where the students are getting qualified instructors, their English courses are going to be good, their sociology, and that's something you don't get if your nursing program isn't in a community college. When it was first planned, one of the thoughts was to build a separate building for the nursing department which I'm glad they didn't do. You know that would really have isolated us. At least we walk in the same corridors with people. I've got somebody who teaches English on one side of me and I have a chemistry teacher in the office next to me.

I could go to the local hospital and work as a supervisor or nights and make more money than I'm making now. But there are a lot of reasons why I would not want to do that. What I'm saying is that, yes, I'd like the promotion, the extra money would be nice, but on the other hand I wouldn't think about leaving because I enjoy what I'm doing. I mean, sure, we all like the extra money and I'd like the status of being able to say I'm an associate professor instead of an assistant professor but I know what the state system is like; I've worked in it long enough . I just feel very good about what I'm doing. I like my students. You know it's convenient for me, it's in the community, I like the people that I work with, I get my summers off with my kids. And I've got a husband that has a full-time job, so that money is not the big thing that it might be for somebody who is a single parent .

In order for me to be tenured I'd have to be promoted. I get multiple-year contracts. It doesn't threaten me. Maybe if I were in some of the other positions up there, like English professors and sociology. Some of them are beginning to feel a little bit pressured because student numbers are dropping and they are starting to put pressure on finding another field that they can teach in. I don't have that feeling because we have so many applicants; unless they close the nursing program out completely, I don't worry about my job. So tenure probably isn't as important to me as it might be to an English professor. We are the only nursing program in the immediate area . It's the one program that is always full, always full.

I look at the people that get promotions and I know the contributions they have made or the advanced degrees they've gotten, so I kind of assume that that's why they are getting them. Maybe it's my old passive self and my feeling that if there are fifteen of us lined up for this promotion and we are all eligible that they are going to be fair about it and they are going to pick the right person out. Perhaps that's not the way it is. I don't know how to fight something like that, I guess. I know the medical field. I know what I know in terms of nursing education, but not education. I don't know how to get at them like I do the doctors because I'm out of my familiar setting. I guess I'm more of a nurse than a teacher really. I've combined the two but I think you know my basic instinct is that I'm a nurse and so therefore it's hard to take myself away from the nursing and say, "Now I'm going to go and deal with these administrators over here," when I really don't know what goes on in that office. I guess I just wouldn't know how to handle going in there and saying, "Hey look, I've been sitting here for nine years."

Nursing was my first profession, education was not, and again it goes way back to when I was going to be a nurse when I was little. You know I certainly feel like an educator but it's that basic underlying thing that I'm a nurse. Teaching is certainly part of nursing no matter where you are. You think of it more as being education because you are in a college setting. I feel like I have become an educator more. When I meet somebody at a party I usually say, "I teach at the community college," and then they'll say, "What do you teach?" and I'll say, "Nursing." I guess I am identifying myself as a teacher at this point then. I don't know.

In a sense what I'm doing is fulfilling my original mission of making sure patients get good care by taking enough people into nursing that I feel I have done a good job educating and therefore they are going to take good care of those patients. I was just talking with one of my graduates yesterday, and I said, "When I know you are out there doing a good job that's kind of an extension of me. You are out there doing the job that I want to see done." I kind of feel good about being a part of a community college. You live in this town and it's a community college in this town. Some of my colleagues at the college will say, "You know, you people are really doing a good job in that nursing program. Students did well on boards this year, you must be doing a good job." I think they really have begun to value us as educators too.

Profile

MARY WINSTED

(Mary Winsted, in her forties, teaches nursing at a metropolitan community college in California. We interviewed her once at her office and twice at her home in the summer of 1981.)

I grew up in Minnesota, lived there until I was seventeen years old. I'm the middle of three girls. I have an older sister and a younger sister. I just always remember my father being very interested in our going to school. Lots of reading. My father died very very young. He was only forty-five when he died. But he just felt that education was the key to a more successful life. My father was very adamant about his three daughters receiving an education. He felt that was very important. He was not able to achieve what he wanted to. So I think a great deal of that rubbed off on me.

Boys in my father's family just went to work when they were sixteen years old. Not much opportunity for a formal education at all. Father had gone to school, grade school, and as far in high school as you went in that time. But he always wanted to go on to do more education. I'm the only one of the three that's completed formal college work. I always enjoyed reading. I was told that a lot. My mother always said, "If you can't find Mary she's probably reading a book." I enjoyed it. Always enjoyed going to school. Also I played piano, and every fall they would have a program. Kids who did something got to perform. So I remember I was in about the third grade and got to perform on stage playing piano, along with a lot of other people. My mother was also very active in the school affairs. She was PTA president, went on the bus when we went to the symphony in St. Paul, that kind of thing. I had long hair, very thick, long braided hair until I was in ninth grade. I decided I had to look like everybody else so I cut this hair off.

I can remember exactly the seat that I was sitting in in the auditorium when Roosevelt announced that we were going to war with Japan. We had been bombed Sunday and this was Monday morning. I was in the seventh grade. The incredible tenseness--there wasn't a sound in that auditorium. I remember how quiet it was. There was a lot of serious conversation and nobody made any sounds at all. I remember getting kind of nauseated which I don't do at all. Just so much tenseness about it. No one knew what was going to happen. There just wasn't a sound in that all whole auditorium as we sat there and listened to him talk to Congress. It was very dramatic, very dramatic.

I had finished my first year at Roosevelt High School and I enjoyed that because I was with everyone that I knew and singing in the a cappella choir. Then my family moved to Spokane because of my father's work. It's more difficult to get into those areas that are already established. I had several friends that I enjoyed and knew but it wasn't like the large group that I had known in Minneapolis at all. I felt it was very, very difficult; but it was also during the war, so the connotation was patriotism. It was okay to be uprooted because you were helping. I didn't like leaving my friends. It was a real uprooting. It was an uprooting for my whole family. I think my father enjoyed it. I did a lot of reading, but probably because I wasn't involved socially the way I might have been had we stayed in Minneapolis. In my last year in high school I had just assumed that I'd be going to the University of Minnesota, because that's where I had been born and raised. My sister was married and living there. I applied there and got a letter back that they didn't take any out-of-state students and I said that doesn't apply to me. I'm not out of state I've lived in Minnesota my whole life. But that was the year that the veterans all went to school and so that was very discouraging.

There was a school not far from Spokane and I could drive back and forth so then I could be at home and still go to college. I can remember doing a lot of preparation for it--visiting the school, seeing what kinds of programs they offered--and I enrolled in a pre-med course that was required for many medical schools.

Although realizing it was very difficult, I felt that as far as making it academically, that I probably wouldn't have a lot of problems with it. After my first year at college --that was an expensive year--I felt that perhaps I could do something else, like going into nursing rather than going into medical school. We weren't poor but we weren't wealthy either and it just seemed unattainable as far as that part of it was concerned. It would mean my family's support for a long number of years. Hindsight would show me that I could have done it differently. Then I thought that you just went to college and your family supported you the whole time you were in school. I wasn't very knowledgeable about loans which were, I'm sure, available even then. At that time I wanted to be more independent than I was living at home. So I made my decision not to go on, to short circuit and settle in a sense for nursing rather than going on with another three years and then getting into a medical school or trying to get into a medical school. That wasn't an unhappy decision. That was kind of a substitute, a more realistic kind of goal.

We had visited my aunt just one time in San Francisco when I was between high school and starting college. We drove to San Francisco and visited her. I thought that that would be just a great place to live. So I applied to Children's Hospital and got accepted. My father felt much better about that. That I wasn't just going off by myself, not going to school without knowing anyone at all. He wasn't in favor of that at all. In our family experience , people didn't go off and live all by themselves. You had to have some kind of family contact. I had just been in training a year and a half when my father had a very massive heart attack and died.

It was a three year program. We lived in a nurse's home. I have some lifelong friends from that, very close friends. We entered in late August. There were about thirty-five which was a large group at that time to enter nurse's training. We were assigned rooms and roommates. The first six weeks are called a probate period that you learn essentially the basics, the fundamentals of a training program of nursing. Then you went on to the floor under supervision. Our day was a seven to eleven day . We had one day a week off which changed. The second year that I was in training we had two days a week off. It seems incredible that we did that much plus all the study time in between. You studied normal anatomy, physiology, and then got into disease and how to care for people with various kinds of problems, medical, surgical, orthopedic. We had pediatrics, obstetrics. Children's Hospital was a hospital for women and children. At that time there were no male patients. Clientele was pretty middle-class people. We had classes all the time for all three years. There was never a time when you didn't have a couple of hours of classes. Exams at the end of each unit and graduation in August. In the senior year you had an elective and you hoped that you got your first choice. I had an elective in surgery and did get it, six weeks in surgery. It was all good, everything. Tuition was very minimal. Everything except your personal things were provided. We lived right there, meals were provided, our student uniforms were provided for us. Instructors were nurses for the most part. We had some physicians lecture, but for the most part they were all nurses. We did a lot of empirical kinds of things working with senior students who would instruct and supervise and show you what to do. The floor nurses did a lot of supervising of students. It was all programmed for you, all planned for you.

So I had finished my nurses training and was rather seriously thinking about being married, but at a later point in time, when the Korean conflict occurred. Since my husband to be was a Navy reserve at the time, he was called back into the service, so we decided to get married. We lived in San Diego. I worked at Mercy Hospital at night and went to school during the day at the state college. His schooling was also interrupted. So when his Navy service was finished we came back to this area. He finished at the university and in the meantime we had our first baby. So it was a process of his going to school and my working. A lot of women did that at that time. I went to school off and on, but once he had finished his schooling then I could devote more time to mine. Our second daughter was born in 1955. Then after she was about a year and a half old I was ready to go back to school on a part-time evening basis. Eventually I did finish my bachelor's in education. Then we had our third one. That kept me out of the academic field for a while.

My husband is a very understanding supportive person so I decided to go to school. He says, "Fine." You can do lots of things if you really want to do them. And my children , in fact, sometimes I think they're better children for parents that are doing things than maybe are home all the time. They have done well academically, socially. Going back to school and finishing school, that was hard to do with two little ones just two years apart. But I just started taking some classes. I was bound and determined to finish at that point in time. I could receive credit for my nursing training, credit in the education department. They gave you a certain amount of college credit. I had been working by that time, ten years at least, as a staff person.

I just went until I finished the B.A. and then saw a more purposeful need for my graduate work. I enjoyed what I was doing. But I could see a dead end at that point; I worked nights and then I'd go to school during the day sleep in the afternoon and then go back to work at night. I could fill my time that way. It was much easier sleeping in the afternoon than being alone at night.

I worked essentially in obstetrics, labor and delivery room. It was always very enjoyable to be able to help someone through that labor process and understand what was going on. Although it was a little late to give them a lot of background, you could really do some good nursing. I enjoyed emergency room because, again, you didn't ever know what was going to come in through the doors. I also enjoyed surgery but that too, I found, there isn't enough contact.

I had a very, very good friend who I had known for a long time and she phoned me one day and said that there was a teaching position open at a nearby community college in the licensed vocational program. They accepted me on a part-time basis. Then they needed a full-time instructor so I applied. I hadn't finished my undergraduate work at that time and the administration was a little bit reluctant although they needed someone. So if I would finish my undergraduate work then they would hire me on a full-time position. That's when I was very serious about going to school and finishing my degree.

In the seven years that I've been at this community college there have been some changes. There were three of us who were new faculty members that came that year . I don't think that my work load has changed all that much but there is a different direction to it. We have lecture day Monday and Friday for our students, or some kind of presentation. That involves two and a half to three hours at any one time. We do this on a select basis--our specialty areas and our interest areas--and we carry that through from one year to the next. On the days that I am presenting, I have spent time in the two weeks prior catching up with current reading and updating my materials, which in nursing goes on all the time. We have an eight to ten thirty or an eleven to one period. I try to do more than just lecture because you can't lecture for that period of time, I don't think, and have it effective. Generally Monday afternoons are devoted to clinical preparation.

We have ten students in each clinical rotation so I'm responsible for ten students, their assignment, their care, their patients, their follow up, and that's undoubtedly the most difficult part of my job. You don't just walk into a clinical facility and have the charge nurse welcome you with open arms. They're generally pretty guarded about their patients until they get to know you and what you can do, how you react and that kind of thing. So over a period of years you develop rapport with a charge nurse. Tuesday mornings I'm generally at the hospital by about ten minutes of seven, and I go over and check the assignments. I meet with the students at seven-thirty and we rather quickly go over their assignment. I usually start off by repeating, as you would in a change of shift report, their individual assignments. And as time goes by, these rotations , they give the assignment back to me they're practicing their method of giving reports. And then we report on duty about ten minutes of eight, and they go to their clinical station.

I'm covering the whole ward during report time. The students and I review such procedures that they might be involved in. It can be as simple as an IV to complex kinds of sections and that sort of thing. The students have access to me by way of a paging system. I'm very specific, you know, "Don't go ahead and do that until I'm supervising you." Once I get the students all established , then I make rounds. Just keep going from one student to another. Sometimes I'll set up specific things. The rest of my morning is spent assisting the students , making sure that they accomplish what they're supposed to. These are essentially second semester students that we are talking about. They are far more independent than beginning students.

After lunch, it's essentially finishing up. Most often, the way hospitals work, the majority of their procedures are done early in the morning or mid-to-late afternoon . The students complete their charting and have a post conference, generally half an hour to forty-five minutes. And during that time we go over procedures in detail, sometimes we go over an event that happened. They finish their day about two-thirty. Then I generally go back on the ward and check their charts to make sure that they have completed what they were supposed to have completed.

Our lab is people. My responsibility is to make certain that the students understand the safety involved. They don't understand all the implications that can go on. That part of the job responsibility weighs heavily for me. Makes it hard . I think teaching is very very hard nursing. It is much easier to do it than it is to sit on your hands, sometimes, and tell someone and watch them, be responsible for the actions of ten people and you are not quite sure where they are . You are never finished, absolutely never finished. If I worked as a staff member in a hospital, when the time to complete my shift was over that would be it; but in my teaching I find that I am absolutely never through.

On Thursday we meet at the college for four hours and that day we go into great detail on special procedures. I try to let them do the presenting. A student has to do the research on their clinical assignment, then present it on Thursday. Those sessions are really hard work sessions. They seem to be very beneficial to the students. On Friday, if I'm presenting, we have a team faculty meeting. We do general housekeeping, student problems, details of the work week and that kind of thing. We have faculty-wide meetings and division-wide meetings about three times a year. Nursing faculty meet about once every two weeks. They are generally about two hours in length. Special committees we fit in between Mondays and Fridays: library, curriculum, audio visual, guest speakers, and that kind of thing.

Then of course we give exams. That's always kind of a rush. We never give the same exam twice, and we are each responsible for our own content area. In the first year, half the questions are multiple choice, the other half are fill-ins. Some students do much better if they can write things out, some students do much better just selecting a multiple-choice answer. The correction takes a fair amount of time. We try to complete them the same day. The students like the teacher to correct their exam as soon as they finish it. We have tried a variety of ways of doing it but this one seems to work out the best. In our scheduling we have the exam and then we have an exam review immediately following it. We do our multiple choices on scantron so that we can give that portion of the exam back to the students and they can read the question. We try to use it as a teaching tool. It does not always turn out that way.

The grades are extremely important to this group. I think it is their commitment prior to coming in. They have invested a lot of time and energy. You know they are going to make this or else. Sometimes we have students who don't go on in nursing. Competition is great to get into the programs. We had over one hundred and twenty qualified people. They had fulfilled all the prerequisites to get into the nursing, and sixty-six are selected on a lottery basis. So if they made it, by God, they are going to get out. They come with unusual demands, more so than other students who are going on, for instance, to a four-year college, going to do something else. They don't feel quite the pressure perhaps that these students do.

We reflect, at this small community college, the national trend. When our enrollment is off, we read that it's off throughout the country. Each class presents its own kind of personality. Our student population in general is older than the average college class would be. Just a small percentage of our students come out of high school and have taken their prerequisites and then come right into the nursing . Many of them have worked in a totally unrelated kind of field, have had jobs, careers in a different area, and have not been satisfied with them and decided that they would like to do nursing. Some have finished a bachelor's program somewhere and there is absolutely no job market for their major. Any of these backgrounds I think are an asset to nursing. A mean age for the population would be well up into the thirties . Many of them have family commitments. We get a lot of people who are either thinking about, or in the process of, or have just completed divorce, and they think nursing is going to be an answer to their personal problems. This makes it difficult also because that is such a traumatic life situation. Many of them work. Some try to work full-time and find it nearly impossible to do that. So they really struggle very hard.

In the class that has just completed its first year, there must be about eight male students. One is retired Navy. A couple are psych techs for whom this is an upgrading kind of thing, rather than staying at that level. A few male students have come through who plan on going into hospital administration. The field of nursing is a beginning background for that. Not many of our women students are interested in hospital administration. There aren't many female hospital administrators actually, so they don't aspire to that. A lot of them go into the specialty areas now--nurse practioner, midwifery--those kinds of specialty areas . Our students for the most part have been successful. They have raised a family or are in the process. They have done all their own house management and they have done it well. A student that has held a job, many of them have done high level kinds of things. They have been successful in their prior academic work or they wouldn't be with us. They come into nursing, that they know absolutely nothing about. It is frustrating for them. They have to start all over again. That is hard for some of them to accept.

When I finished training, thirty years ago, the complexity was not present, the technological kinds of complexity. The older nurse would just as soon work under direct supervision and have someone tell her what to do. For the younger person who has a more independent life style, that's much more difficult. The younger physicians would just as soon have nurses make those kinds of nursing decisions. The older physicians like to hang onto their ways of doing it. The technical end of it too, the hardware and equipment, simply was not around. There was a period of time here when it was very difficult to be even constructively critical to a student. The students had a tendency to object to any faculty member calling them up short: "You're not prepared today." They would run to the Dean of Instruction with all kinds of complaints. I have called it a sixth grade mentality. I think it is endemic to nursing programs pretty much. That is one thing that comes out of conferences. The trip that I just made, we talked about programs. The problems and the situations are somewhat similar all over, and it is peculiar to nursing. Whatever the nursing personality is has some inherent problems.

The LPN student has a different personality than an R.N. student. Has far fewer prerequisites in fact--high school completion and recommendation for courses prior to coming in. So for the most part they were very grateful, very willing students. Our RN student has commited herself to a great deal of time. The beginning LPN student very often is one who has decided to try a little independence, to go back to school, to see what the outside world is like. The RN student has been in that outside world and knows pretty much where she is.

I did a whole year's study on midwives and midwifery. Obstetrics is my clinical specialty. At that time there was a lot of publicity, a lot of public interest in midwifery. Since I had done a lot of work in that area I thought it would be just an interesting thing. So I presented my proposal to our governing board and it was accepted along with many others. I spent a whole year doing that. From my sabbatical I developed a six-week course called Contrasts and Comparisons in Obstetrics. That's probably my favorite course to teach. I teach it generally twice a semester, in the evening, in addition to my regular teaching load. I'd love it if they made it part of my full teaching load. So far they haven't. It's open to any interested person at all and of course in California we also have a requirement for continuing education requirements in order to maintain licensure. You have to have thirty hours every two years to maintain licensure so this is board-approved for that. So I get lots of RN's and LPN's cause it's both RN and LPN board-approved.

There are certain expectations, there are certain behaviors that are critical in nursing in order for all of us to operate in some kind of a safe manner. This last spring, very near graduation, a student was in a pediatric rotation and made some errors that this instructor felt just were not acceptable. There were about three examples. This student was given an unsatisfactory evaluation by this instructor. The student immediately went to the Dean of Instruction. The same girl who left a patient sitting up unattended is working somewhere and I think that these faculty people realize the ramifications. She was able to complete the program. She had to take a board exam and I have no idea of whether she passed that or not. She was allowed to continue. She was allowed to complete the whole program. As the students complete that second year they realize the ultimate responsibility that they are going to have . There are many things that we do independently, but we also work under the direction of a physician.

A student has to understand what it means when a physician walks in and says, "Why don't you give the patient some water and get him out of bed." That's a direct order and it has to go through various channels. It's illegal for a student to take a verbal order. They have to know that right away. You immediately say to the doctor, "I'm sorry, I'm a student. I can't take a verbal order." These problems rarely come in the theoretical portion. It comes from the clinical portion of our teaching. That's where the students are most apt to feel they are being treated unjustly. It is stressful, as much for an instructor certainly as it is for the student. I think the stresses are great when you work in a hospital in a clinical situation. No one is terribly casual about it. These students when they leave the hospital, they all go in their own direction. When I was in training, it was a much more family kind of situation. We encourage study groups for that reason. Some work some don't. The students who study in study groups for the most part seem to do better than those who study independently. The study groups, as they go along, seem to be have a much more relaxed attitude than one who struggles alone.

Legally I am ultimately responsible for the care that my students give. I am responsible for seeing that the care is given, for the procedures, but I work very, very closely with the staff people. Now I have worked for a period of time with most of the nurses. I have several staff nurses that are excellent, who like students, who like to work with them. There are other nurses who think they are being bothered. A student just takes a lot of time. Students are good scapegoats for certain things. I hear this from housekeeping. You have to become friends with the housekeeping. They are a great source. They can really be of assistance to you sometimes. They will even come to me now and tell me I think that student needs some help in there. As the students become more skilled, the nurses realize that the patient is actually going to get better care with the students around.

I obviously enjoy teaching the students. I think you have to ultimately like nursing. I get very, very tired of sick people. Sometimes you think the whole world is nothing but that. So the respites are nice. Do something entirely different and then come back. Seeing a student you know when the light bulb comes on and they put their picture together and get into it. Financially this work is not bad in comparison with many other things that women can do or that they are still doing, as far as financial gains are concerned. The pay scale is across the board here ; it does not matter whether you are male or female in this community college district. Staff nursing has just about caught up with what I am earning, so there is not that big a difference; however my free time is greater. So on a weekly basis I probably earn more. I have summers off , Easter, Christmas vacation, where a staff nurse does not. After five years they have three weeks vacation and it progresses from there. Many of the nurses that I work with are up to six and seven weeks vacation per year, so the benefits are also good there.

I've enjoyed seeing women being able to get into occupations that have been male-dominated, but I think it's difficult. It is nice to see the kind of male student we have. We have males of all kinds in nursing and I think nursing needs it. I think we need much more male influence than we have had. It should not be a total female-dominated place. Nursing has been essentially female and that has been my whole life experience in the work world except in the community college, where it's male dominated. But that has not made that much difference because I have been in nursing. If I were a female in any one of the other disciplines, that may well have made a difference. I think sometimes women are not accepted in the other areas. I would think a male would have a difficult time in nursing. I think he was treated differently by both the female and the male faculty .

It 's just been since 1955 that a great transfer took place from a hospital setting into a community college. I think the product has not been as successful as it was thought it might be. I really have that feeling. I think that --again depending upon the individual--that it takes a longer period of time to gain clinical skills; I think the hospitals are realizing that now. The hospitals want a person with essentially five years' experience. In the last few years the hospitals have a three-month program of orientation . Those students who graduate from our program and then go into one of these preceptorships do very well.

I just had a birthday; the time is running out.I still do consider medical school. In fact my oldest daughter encourages me all the time. "Mother, you just should go back and do it, now." Realistically, it's a little late in life to start medical school. And again, there's a lot of commitment, there's an incredible amount of commitment when you start back in a program like that. I get serious enough about it to send for the catalogues and then I get realistic. The emotional level and the intellectual level tell you two different things and I think my emotinal level runs away with it, from time to time. I'm not so sure that you know, now, the commitment because our children are grown but it's a long haul. I fully realize what it entails. I can be compromising and find what I have to do. I'm not unhappy with what I've done.

With my children I feel that there have been more alternatives than were available when I started my education. I maybe feel a little bit short-changed now and then. Perhaps if my mother and father had come from a more professional background there might have been more knowledge about how to go about doing that. That's the way it was, you know. The bright side of it is that there has been some change. The GI bill opened up just incredible possibilities for all kinds of people. You know had there been a GI bill, say, after World War I, I wonder what our society would have been like. I don't blame it on society. I think the students that I encounter are interesting students. For many of them there is a great deal of status, you know, if they are a nurse, that is a good accomplishment and so that is a step up in society.

Profile

MARILYN NORRIS

(Marilyn Norris, in her thirties, teaches in a dental program in a metropolitan community college in Massachusetts. We interviewed her in her office twice and once at her home in the winter of 1980.)

I went to high school in the city, went to an orthodontist and he had these people running around the office and I thought it looked kind of interesting, so I thought maybe I would like to do that. I did well in high school, so I thought I could pretty much do what I wanted to do. However, I didn't have the feeling that I could go onto something like Mt. Holyoke or Vassar, didn't have that kind of image of myself. I was also very tired of liberal arts courses; I wanted something tangible, I wanted a marketable skill. I wasn't sure that I wanted to spend four years at it either, two years would be enough. So looking at these women running around the office, I thought I would be interested in doing that. I didn't want the financial responsibility of becoming a dentist and I also felt like I didn't want to go to school for eight years to become a dentist. And at that point I probably thought I couldn't have achieved that, couldn't do that well. So I will take the middle of the road which is dental hygiene.

In high school I did all the right things--I was in the band, majorette, played the flute, was the band secretary, on the honor society, did everything right. It wasn't until I got to college that I realized how little I knew. I did well--I worked hard, I was the persevering student. I had to work hard for what I got, but when I got it, I thought I deserved it. In high school I always did as well as I thought I could. But maybe I didn't overdo it, maybe I didn't work as hard as I could, to do the very best so that, this is so hard to explain-so I could become a dentist, so I could go on to a seven sisters school. I never thought of myself as brilliant, maybe that was it. We did have students in the school who would score 760 out of 800 and those students would be going to Harvard. I would think of myself in the next range, and I would be going to say the next level of school, or lower than that. I always got a lot of positive feedback from my parents. And I did very well in comparison with other members of the family. I think that I probably could have gotten into a much better school. As far as the female-male role models, we were brought up that women would marry and have children and that was one of the primary rules for women. And that you could fit in your college and your career-into that somehow. How you did it was up to you, you were given that freedom, as opposed to families where the main role of the woman is to marry a man and to have children as opposed to career coming first. We were supposed to have a happy blend.

But after two years of dental hygiene schooling I transferred to a four-year college because I knew I wanted something else out of life besides being a dental hygienist. I respected people with education. And I wanted to be one of those people. I also wanted to be a student some more. I thought, well, given two more years as a student, maybe I can make some more decisions within those two years. I would be able to teach if I wanted to and I could go into public health, and I was interested in public health.

Then I taught at a dental hygiene school in a city in the Northeast. In the clinic we had thirty-seven chairs and quite a few instructors. We see different people all the time. We would have three groups of thirty-three to thirty-seven students come into the clinic, then they would go to an outside assignment. By the end of two years I knew everyone's name and face. Some I knew fairly well. Others all I could do was remember their name, but I didn't know anything about them. As the frustration level grew, I thought about what I really wanted to do with my life. It was a sort of short-term question, though. I started to look for a job and I applied here and thought, well, I'll try it and see what it is like. I had no idea what it meant to teach in a community college setting.

We work in a very structured atmosphere, where cleanliness is important. I used to think personal appearance very important for the hygienist. We were brought up under the concept that the hygienist was always in a white uniform , hair pulled back and no hair touching on her collar, nails a certain length, and it was really almost like the military. In the past few years I've decided that if the student can do things well, and do it competently, and react with their patients well, that is what is important to me. I really don't care too much what they look like. If I am a good role model and the other faculty are good role models, they are probably going to do as we do.

I am teaching the same students all the time. I have two classes, the freshmen students and the senior students. Everytime I meet with them I am dealing with a new concept or an expansion of an old concept. And on the clinical situation, every single day you are dealing with new people and different techniques, so it is not routine . I want to get to school and then have breakfast and start my routine. On a clinic day, I have clinic first thing in the morning. I probably have breakfast and then I come upstairs, unlock everything so the students would have access to cabinets and instruments. While I am eating breakfast I am wondering whether or not all the students are arriving, how many patients are upstairs, and what procedures they will be doing today, just getting myself psychologically prepared for clinic and dealing with patients.

We have a dentist in the clinic. The school employs a dentist for a couple of hours per session, and he checks the students on their charting of patients' oral condition and many times we get into discussions on theories and surgery techniques. You have to be a liaison between the students and the dentists some of the time because some of the dentists are not educators . They are dentists and they are not always used to dealing with the emotional status of the eighteen-year-old woman. One of the things about the clinic is that each patient is examined by a dentist and each student is examined on each exam that they do. In the future we are thinking of evaluating them on a few cases and not on all of them. It would allow the students some freedom so they won't always feel like they are being evaluated every time they take a step.

In this building a lot of the faculty that eat in the dining room are either health or biology and once in a while we get people from social science . We might then tend to talk about economics more, or other topics instead of health, so that broadens the scope of our conversation. A couple of weeks ago we were teasing one man from the social science department asking him how many hours he taught per week. We accepted the position knowing that there were more hours and maybe more administrative responsibilities, but we were kind of teasing him because we were jealous of the fact that the people from the English Department and social sciences had fewer hours to teach. Well, apparently he went back to a couple of other people in his division and said that we were really riding him too hard. I am sure he has his responsibilities too and maybe they equal ours, but we do tend to think that people from other departments don't have as much work, and then every once in a while they say we don't really know what their lives are like. They may have thirty composition papers to correct a week or something like that. But they are on campus fewer hours.

When I drive home reviewing the day, I do a lot of thinking about how we can change the system so that there is less pressure on the students, so that we are evaluating less and teaching more. We are spending so much time doing check-ins and check-outs and getting materials to students and little administrative things, that there is not enough time to teach or there are not enough faculty in the room to teach. My gut feeling is--get rid of the evaluating system and just teach. But then I think the students would tend not to perform,they would waste time.

Every system that I've seen, no matter how it is designed, penalizes the students for what they have done wrong. I noticed a big difference in students who come in the first few weeks of school, who are very energetic and enthusiastic and very excited about school and dental hygiene, and then we put them into a very structured program where there are a lot of requirements and tension and studying and things. I think partly because of the evaluation system, they are penalized in so many ways that their attitude changes. Because I see so many things that they do well and yet you are evaluating them. There is something about the negative comments that bothers me. I do believe in constructive criticism but I don't see that coming across in the way that we design evaluation tools. I've thought about this a great deal. Whenever I am asked to do something and I am doing it for the first time and just a colleague is watching me do something, I feel tension within my body. I don't recall having a teacher or parent or anyone criticize me so much that I got upset inside, I don't know where that came from, but it is inside of me. When I know that someone is evaluating me, I don't think I am performing as well as I can when I am totally relaxed and feeling in control and I am confident that I can do it.

When I first started teaching, the most enjoyable experience for me was to teach someone to do something that was completely foreign to them, and in a very short period of time they could actually perform the procedure . Now I've been doing that for almost nine years and it is sort of becoming very routine to me.For the amount of work that I am doing I would like a little more reward. Sometimes I compare myself with peole who are of the same or similar educational background as far as number of years of education and experience and similar degrees, and I see that the salary is not equal, so that is sometimes frustrating. What is most important is that I am happy with my job. I have been doing it for around nine years now and there isn't much room in this area for mobility. The only upward mobility would be to become a department chairperson of a dental hygiene program. In order to do that I would probably have to move out of the area. But I really like New England.

When the student graduates and leaves here, she might not be providing optimum care or good quality care to a person who deserves it. That is why I want to do a really good job. I want to be very good as an educator so that students perform better, so that they are providing a good service for the patients. Our satisfactory level or standards are very high. I'd like to have each student develop into a hygienist that cares about her work, that doesn't go to work to earn a certain amount of money per day; she is there from eight until five o'clock looking at her watch wondering how many hours are left in the day. I think those people are unhappy at their work and that is what bothers me. If you are unhappy at work, many times you are unhappy in your life. But I guess I'd like them to get the feeling that it doesn't have to be that way, that they can change things, they can change situations .

I wish I had more time to myself to read, work on a hobby, go away for a weekend and not feel as though I really should be spending time preparing something or working on a course. Some of the frustrations are probably the time commitment that I feel is necessary in order to do a good job. I go home at night and feel that I need to spend a couple of hours working and maybe I would like to be doing something else. I've always been pretty dedicated at what I do, but I come from a family that is like that. My father worked at a place for thirty-five years at pretty much the same job, and my mother seems to work hard at what she does and she even brings her work home at night. Everyone in the family works hard at what they do.

I want the work to be challenging, satisfying, rewarding, provide emotional satisfaction. What I enjoy most about working here is working with our department chair. I enjoy her philosophy of life, her attitude, the way she deals with faculty, students, dentists, administrators; we really have a very good working relationship. I enjoy working with her, but then also I want more out of my job. I want upward mobility and I want advancement and right now at the school, that is not possible. Our field is so narrow. Dental assisting is not something that I would enjoy doing. I've had times in the semester when I just want the semester to end. Probably three-quarters of the way through the semester when the students are tired, and the faculty are tired. But I never just have to get out of here, where I am just so frustrated that I just have to leave.

I am teaching pretty much the same courses. I would like to do something more challenging. I have been teaching one course for nine years and eighty or ninety percent of that course material I have to cover in order for our students to pass National Boards. I try to make it enjoyable for the students. It is a very dry subject and our students in this area don't have a great chance to utilize a lot of the information because they are getting a two-year degree. Even though I've tried numerous approaches, I don't look forward to it. I would like either to get rid of the course, or I would like to go back to school and get some different ideas so that I could change the course. And I just haven't figured out how I can do that.

I talk to my students about the fact that they won't find satisfaction from the patients and they probably won't find it from their employer either. They have to get their satisfaction out of what they are doing. What a traditional hygienist does can become rote, so it is difficult to constantly get personal satisfaction out of doing these technical skills . I see my position as being completely different because there is so much variety in it and there is a lot of freedom.

Commentary

Roberta DeVane in Massachusetts and Mary Winsted in California affirm their work as nursing faculty in their respective community colleges. Their affirmation is a result of the interaction of their individual life histories with the character and the structure of the field of nursing and that of community colleges. To understand that complex interaction, the resulting tensions and their resolution, would be to have a measure of insight into some issues central to community college education.

Roberta DeVane knew when she was a child that she wanted to be a nurse. Her early and steadfast commitment found no challenge from anyone urging her to consider other options available to women,as might happen were she growing up today. Although she was the outstanding student in her high school, as a female and a child of working-class parents, the path was laid for her to enter the three-year diploma nursing program in her local hospital. One English teacher, in what may have been a casual comment, helped pave the path by suggesting that it was a good thing that she was not going to college. Despite the fact that the entire school considered her an outstanding student, something in his wisdom determined that she was not college material.

She enrolled in the three-year hospital diploma program and received an award for being the outstanding nursing student in the district. With hindsight she now is critical about the nature of such programs, sensing that they may tend to overwhelm inexperienced trainees and exploit them at the same time. Even at the time she knew she wanted something more, and with the award money she received she enrolled in a bachelor's degree program in nursing.

At first she did not like her university program. She was asked to study much that seemed peripheral to the job of a nurse or repetitive of what she had already learned in her diploma program. But she also knew that she was learning a lot that she did not know. With determination she completed the program for a bachelor's degree in nursing, working and going part-time to school for six years. It took Roberta DeVane nine years to get her bachelor's degree and another six years to get her master's which she began immediately after completing her bachelor's. That initial choice, to attend the diploma program in her local hospital, cost her a great deal of time. In a passing sentence in her interview she says that her high school counselor did not tell her that there were other ways to become a nurse in addition to the hospital diploma program. Growing up as a woman in a working-class town in the forties and fifties, she was not presented with options from which to choose.

But what she consciously realizes now, and what she may have felt but not verbalized then, is that her bachelor's degree program affected her view of the world. Very subtly it began to change her behavior and attitude toward people and her understanding of what her job was in a way that the diploma program had not done. In her understated way, she pays a tribute to her degree program and to herself.

With her degree she was asked to teach in practical nursing programs, diploma programs and four-year programs even as she broadened her experience as a nurse. After taking six months off when she had her first child, she realized that she could not stay home and be a full-time mother. She went back to work in the evenings, and started teaching part time at her local community college. Based on that experience she was invited to join the faculty full time. When she first joined the community college faculty, she was somewhat intimidated by both the students and her faculty colleagues. She thought of herself as "just a nurse" among highly motivated, educated students and colleagues who seemed like "professors" to her. With experience, however, she overcame much of her sense of intimidation, especially with the students.

She leads a divided professional life as a community college nursing faculty member. Because of her responsibility for supervising the clinical experience of her students on a week-to-week basis, she is often in the hospital more than on the college campus. Sometimes when she returns to campus she feels like a visitor. Her clinical work keeps her from being fully involved in college committees; if committee meeting times conflict with her work at the hospital there is no question which is of more import.

At the beginning she sensed some resentment on the part of her colleagues toward the nursing program because the state regulatory board mandated that the ratio of nursing faculty to nursing students be kept at a maximum of one to ten. Her colleagues could not appreciate the amount of work she had to do to fulfill the requirements of the regulatory boards that oversee training in the field of nursing.

Aspects of her work at the college such as the mandated office hours frustrate her. She works so closely with her students in the clinical setting that it would seem totally inappropriate if her students had to seek her out during office hours to talk with her. But that type of rub does not undermine her basic enjoyment and affirmation of her work. In order to do her teaching she has to keep up to date in her field. Her nursing colleagues meet to revise syllabi and update course materials; they attend professional seminars to keep up to date so that they can function well both in the classroom and in the hospital setting. She stays intellectually abreast of her field and goes more deeply into it.

She respects her students. Unlike most of the other programs in the college, her's is not subject to open admissions. Students may have open admission to the college but not to all of the college's programs. Her nursing program has four applicants for every available slot. The admissions process is extensive, time consuming, and difficult because DeVane knows she is passing judgment which will be critical to the applicant's future. Like many community college faculty, she knows her students well; she understands their home situation and the complications in their lives which affect their studies.

But unlike what we were told by faculty like Richard Young, there is no question of adjusting the standards of her field to the perceived caliber of her students. She is not like Nancy Warren, torn between her sense of standards and the development of the individual student. The story DeVane tells of having to fail a married woman who was only a few years younger than she and to tell her of the failure right before Christmas reveals that while sometimes what she has to do is painful to her, she is not ambivalent. The standards of her field, the state boards that her students will have to take, the enormous sense of responsibility she senses towards patients, all combine to make her sense of her professional obligations take priority over all other considerations. She does not face, as other colleagues do, pressure from the administration to somehow keep numbers of students in school. Such pressure, given her professional sense and the controls on numbers the regulatory boards exercise, seem not to enter into her world, or if they do the structure of nursing training allows her to dismiss them. As a consequence, DeVane does not convey a sense of a lack of power in her work. Her profession exerts some basic demands that affect her work load, her relationship with students, and her sense of herself as being in charge within her domain.

Nonetheless, there are some tensions. At the hospital, despite her qualifications, experience, and familiarity with the hospital routine, she and her students are still guests. She is able to manage the complexities of the relationships she and her students have with the hospital with relatively little trouble except in one area: relationships with the doctors. When she was in training, nurses were accustomed to treating doctors as gods. When they came into a room, the nurses were expected to stand. The basic job of the nurses was conceptualized as the nurse doing what she is told by the doctor and not having to think too much for herself. The smaller the hospital the more that notion of nursing held.

Over the years since DeVane was trained in her diploma program an expanded professionalization of the nurse's role has taken place along with new notions about the rights of patients as consumers of health care. The movement toward increased professionalism in the nursing field in concert with the rise of consumerism in the health field has led to a role for nurses that requires exercising judgment, taking initiative, teaching patients, and being their advocates in the hospital. That new sense of the role of a nurse is in conflict with attitudes of many doctors, especially older doctors, toward the job of the nurse. DeVane has to confront these notions both for herself and for her students. Her story of the confrontation with the doctor who had yelled at her in the emergency room captures the tensions inherent in the changing roles and her resolution of those tensions.

Her confidence in her knowledge, experience in the medical field, and her commitment to the changing role of the nurse which she began to adopt when she went to the university for her bachelor's degree, all contributed to her ability to confront the traditional authority of the doctor. At the same time, her commitment to her profession does her little good in confronting the authority system within her own community college. Because her clinical work takes her out of the college so much, because she cannot be totally involved in college committees, because--although she has become more comfortable among her colleagues--she still sees herself as a nurse and the others as professors, she is passive in the face of a system that has not promoted her in the nine years she has been a member of the faculty.

It is an unfortunate irony of the community college structure that DeVane's commitment to excellence within her professional field, the energy she must spend in keeping up-to-date in her field and in giving her students the type of supervision required by her profession, tend to detract from her ability to pay attention to the aspects of working in her community college that seem to lead to promotion. She is away from campus a good deal. Although she does not try to avoid service on committees, she cannot give committees top priority. She gives least to that aspect of the work which many other faculty we interviewed decried as almost futile. Her work in the community, in health-related matters ironically, does not seem to be recognized or deemed important by her community college . She knows that she is being passive in the face of the situation, even though she realizes that she has begun to see herself first as a teacher and then as a nurse when she describes her work to friends.

That tension remains unresolved. It is not likely that the college itself will take the initiative to recognize the aspects of DeVane's work that keep her out of the normal everyday life of the college, detract from her visibility, and keep her low in the line of promotion, continually being passed over for others. Nor is it perhaps likely that DeVane herself will confront the administration on the issue. Having recently recovered from a serious illness which she describes as deepening the quality of the work she can do with her students, she began to develop a sense of what is important in life that comes with a confrontation with such illness. That sense may or may not include taking on the administration about her promotion. It does include urging her students to go on for their bachelor's degree in nursing, because that is where she has been and that is where she sees her profession going.

Mary Winsted's experience across the country in California, in a larger community college located in a metropolitan area, shares much with Roberta DeVane. She presents fully the intensity and complexity of clinical supervision in hospitals where she and her students are essentially guests. She outlines the same tensions with the doctors who want to hang on to traditional conceptions of the proper role of a nurse. She has a similar view of the expanded role of the nurse and what the essence of good nursing is . Like DeVane in Massachusetts, her responsibilities to clinical supervision take her away from the community college a considerable amount of time and limit the contributions she can make to the college through work of committees. Like DeVane she has a strong commitment to keeping up with changes in her field. She has developed a specialty in nursing and has devoted her sabbatical to pursuing it. She teaches a course in the evening division that she loves and wishes that it could become part of her regular teaching load.

A major difference in her experience from that of DeVane appears in her profile. They both share the same commitment to the standards of their profession and feel a heavy responsibility to train their students to carry out their duties with the care that is necessary when lives are at issue. But somehow Winsted's professional authority and that of her colleagues is challenged by the students and allowed to be undermined by the college administration. A colleague, faced with failing a student for careless practice on the wards, finds herself in a position of seeing the resulting dispute with the student resolved in favor of the student by the Dean of Instruction. The recourse the nursing faculty seem to have to the undermining of their professional judgment is to hope that the student will not pass the nursing exam administered by the state which gives entry to the profession.

Mary Winsted reinforces DaVane's story of the sense of choices made and not made solely because she was a woman and not a man. Unlike DeVane, Winsted did not want to be a nurse from early childhood. She came to nursing as a substitute for going to medical school which was what she really wanted to do. But in the years immediately following World War II, as she probably accurately assessed, admission to medical school would have been highly improbable for her. She knew that she would have difficulty being admitted and would have difficulty relying on her family for the financial support required for the long years of undergraduate education and medical school leading to becoming a doctor. It all seemed out of her reach. She dropped out of college since it was expensive and she knew that it was not going to lead her to what she wanted. As a substitute for what she wanted, she chose to become a nurse.

As in the case of Roberta DeVane, nobody told her at that time that it was possible to get her nursing preparation in a program that would lead also to a four-year degree. The silence about such programs then , was somehow connected to the tension between the nurses' aspirations to become more professional and the medical establishment's operating to keep nurses in their traditional place. It appears that the traditional relationship was reinforced by not promoting four-year and graduate programs in nursing.

Winsted took her training in a diploma program thirty years ago, and while less critical of such programs than DeVane, her description of what it was like and the description of the control the hospital had over her life for those three years matches DeVane's experience. Like DeVane she realized after she finished her diploma program that she wanted to complete her college education. Four-year programs in nursing would accept none of her credits from her diploma training, so she ended up taking her bachelor's degree in education in the field of human development. It took Mary Winsted ten years to earn her bachelors and master's degree. The irony, of course, is that she could have earned a B.A. and a medical degree in less time. Mary Winsted substituted nursing for medical school because that seemed realistic to her. She substituted marriage for continuing to pursue a specialty in her field because the Korean war put a sense of urgency on her relationship with her fiance. She supported her husband while he finished his schooling. She raised her children, ran a household, worked, and went to school. What is a good way to talk about the fact that women, like members of minorities, often have to work twice as hard, twice as long, to get half the distance that white men do?

To this day, thirty years after she finished her initial nurse's training, Winsted entertains thoughts of medical school. Her children urge her to pursue those thoughts. Her wanting something more for herself is balanced by what she considers the realities of her situation . She is a committed professional. She enjoys her teaching and wants her students to extend themselves the way she knows it has to be done if the obligations to the work of a nurse are going to be carried out. She enjoys seeing males come into the nursing profession because it is the flip side of the coin of women being successful in occupations traditionally dominated by men. But for herself, at this point she is not considering changing careers.

Like Mary Winsted, Marilyn Norris wants something more. She chose to become a dental hygienist because she did not see herself as the type of person who went to one of the "seven sisters" colleges. She was unwilling to make the type of commitment that seemed necessary to becoming a dentist, and from somewhat superficial observation, the role of dental hygienist seemed attractive to her. She went to a private school for dental hygiene and then, wanting something more, went on to get her four-year college degree.

Unlike the situation in DeVane's and Winsted's nursing program, she does her clinical supervision in an on-campus dental clinic. The clinic services mainly people who can not afford regular dental care. Her major concern in her teaching is the intensive and ever-present evaluation her students receive. As in the nursing profession, there is a constant pressure on dental hygienists to be concerned about the well-being of their patients. Outside regulatory agencies determine their curriculum through the pressure of mandatory licensing exams. Norris is clearly committed to the standards of her field, but she is uncomfortable with teaching methods that constantly stress evaluation. She has a sense that the students are not being treated as whole persons and that the way they are being trained will have serious implications for the way they end up treating patients.

The amount of time she puts into her job as a faculty member in a self-contained program in which she has both classroom and clinical responsibilities makes her somewhat critical about other faculty in her community college who have a shorter day. But the main issue for Norris is not the comparative amount of time and effort she spends on her job, but rather the intrinsic satisfaction she is or is not getting from her work. Unlike DeVane and Winsted, she does not unambiguously affirm her work. She works as hard and is as committed to it as they are, but feels a sense of stifled opportunity.

Part of that sense is that, unlike the field of nursing, the field of dental hygiene does not seem to be moving toward a redefinition of the role of hygienist and a redefinition of the relationship between hygienist and dentist. As a consequence, the task of preparing hygienists stays on a technical training level, and Norris becomes frustrated because from her own education and experience she knows there is more to the relationship between hygienist and patient than technique and instruments. On the other hand, she also knows that a broader concept of the field is not on the horizon, perhaps because it would most likely place hygienists in financial competition with dentists. She is chafing in a situation in which the status of her profession seems difficult to alter and the preparation that is offered to students in the community college tends to reinforce a narrow conception of her role.

The experience of DeVane, and Winsted indicate that in those areas where faculty have a strong professional affiliation , the demands of the profession can overcome the restrictiveness of the community college structure. Faculty stay abreast of their field, exercise control over their standards of evaluation, and maintain a sense of good work not defined by the community college but rather through their interaction with the field. Their success is basically defined through their relationships with the hospitals, through their ability to deal with the hierarchy of the medical field, and through their students' success on the certification examinations for the profession. If, to meet the demands of the program, students need to spend more than two years, they do so. If, to meet the requirements of the state regulatory agencies, faculty/student ratios must be no more than ten to one, they are.

On the other side of the coin is the possibility that the students who are being successful in the nursing programs in the community colleges are not those who, for reasons of race, social class, and educational history, are using the community college as their last chance at the "American dream." The description DeVane and Winsted give of their students is that of mature and experienced women who have work experience and enough competence in math and science to meet the prerequisites for the program. In fact, we have heard in our interviews with community college faculty of a trend toward people who already have their bachelor's degree competing for spots in programs like nursing that seems to be increasing to the point that the number of college graduates seeking training in community colleges is as significant a factor as the number of community college students transferring to four-year colleges. The tension between excellence and equality is not resolved in nursing programs. In fact they may serve to reinforce it. Rigorous prerequisites and professional licensing examinations may serve to make it easier to slip into an approach to resolution that evades issues of equity and affirms getting rid of the dilemma rather than resolving it.

Chapter Nine

Head and Hand: The Work of Industrial Technology Faculty

Introduction to the Profiles

In the preceding two chapters we presented the profiles of faculty who teach in career education programs for occupational areas dominated by women. In this chapter we present the profiles of three community college faculty members who teach in occupational areas normally employing men. Edward Thompson teaches in a program in a California community college designed to train students in small-engine repair. Scott Muller, in New York State, teaches in a program which prepares students for work in the air conditioning industry . Leonard Braddock, also in New York State, teaches in a materials testing program.

The issues raised by the experience of these three faculty members highlight dichotomies that are ingrained in our social consciousness. At the center of these profiles are notions of talent and worth linked to conventional polarizations of training and education, skill and understanding, practical and theoretical, manual and intellectual labor. These dichotomies are complicated by their interactions with issues of race, social class, and gender. The work of the three faculty whose profiles follow is in areas which, given present trends, are becoming more and more central to the nature of community colleges. Exploring the nature of their work may help us to understand significant societal issues as they are reflected in community college education.

Profile

EDWARD THOMPSON

(Edward Thompson, in his mid-thirties, teaches engine technologies at a suburban California community college. We interviewed him in his office in the summer of 1981.)

My great-great-great-grandfather came over from Portugal on a ship that hauled cork. He and his brother bought a ranch, about three hundred acres. My grandmother and my grandfather lived on it and I spent a lot of time down there helping them. I can remember being there almost every weekend. It was fun because my grandfather would let me shoot the guns and I could drive the tractor when I was little. As I was growing up and went through school I did just about like everybody else. I went to grade schools and went to high school, not being a very good student or anything, but I worked for my father the entire time. I started working at the age of eleven in the garage. I was always kind of a big kid. So I started working with him, picking up the trade of being a mechanic.

Junior high was a terrible time . I think junior high ought to be abolished. I became a little rebellious during junior high. I got okay grades but I was a little bit more of a troublemaker. They ran the thing kind of like a prison and the vice-principal had a big paddle and he would go around swatting you. It was tough to learn anything.

But I enjoyed my work after school. It is hard to learn anything from your father but his partner was an excellent mechanic and very patient. From the time I caught on to things he gave me all the responsibility that I wanted and at age thirteen I was doing the books and running the place. I was learning and getting paid for it . It was buying me my cars and my motorcycle and things that I wanted. While I worked for my father I held several other jobs including building patio screen covers and driving trucks. I didn't think that I was going to go to college. I saw myself as an electrician or a plumber, or some high-paid type of service job. Also at that time I was racing boats and motorcycles and cars occasionally. I graduated from high school by the skin of my teeth--just barely made it out. I continued working for my dad and I went to work for a Ford dealership as a mechanic. At that particular time I crashed my motorcycle and ended up in the hospital having some discs removed from my back. So I started to think that maybe the idea of being a plumber or electrician the rest of my life was not the way to go.

I didn't take auto shop in high school cause I knew more than the instructor did, but I did take wood shop and did take some metal shop. I took four years of architectural and mechanical drawing.When I had the operation I was just out of high school. They were shooting hot and heavy over there in Vietnam and they inducted me. They put me on a bus and sent me down to the fort and the next day I saw a doctor and the doctor sent me back home and said, "I don't know why they sent you down here anyway."

I was bored in high school. I would go to high school for the social activity. You know, I got C's and B's. I liked science classes. I didn't have the grades to be in college prep. The people who were in college prep were the goody-two-shoes and the cheerleaders. I was not that type of person. I always knew that I could do it; it just didn't interest me that much.

So I entered the local community college like most of the kids did out of high school. I enrolled in an electronics program there. I went one semester and I had to go back into the hospital. So I had to withdraw from the program. Meanwhile my mother was always telling me that I ought to be a teacher. There was a shortage of teachers, especially technical teachers. Although that sounded good, I wasn't quite sure that I was the type to be a teacher. I was looking at the money that they were actually paying people that were leaving a two-year institution, money and lifestyle being a motivating factor in my life at that time. I decided to go back to school in general education . So I enrolled in more varied classes at the community college, other than just the electronics. Started to get a little bit broader picture. I used the junior college much like many of our students do here today, as somewhat of a commuter thing. I went to my classes and I maintained a job after work. I paid my way. My parents did not have a lot of money.

When I got done, guys that I worked with were transferring to a state college. I guess it was about this time that I figured that this teaching routine would not be bad. I rather enjoyed kids, younger people. So I decided, what the heck, I will give it a shot, and I applied to the state college. I got up there and got around more people involved in education. I finally figured out that was what I was going to do. When I got into college I saw a direct relationship between the amount of money that I would make and my ability to succeed in school. I played the student game well. I have a kind of semi-photographic memory which helps. So I went ahead and completed a major in industrial technology, and I also have a minor in biology. Then had to go into my fifth year, which are your education courses. I student-taught in a little town where the high school had three hundred kids in it, total, and the big thing was the Future Farmers Association. I taught machine shop. When I completed that, I came back home and I got married, and started looking for a job.

I started looking in the immediate district and was not able to find anything. So I got myself a job driving trucks, thinking that things were going to open up. I went through a bunch of interviews and then out of the clear blue sky at the end of August I got a contract to teach in a special program for handicapped kids. This was under a vocational grant. I had a traveling sideshow, so to speak. It was a large trailer, and they would move them to the different high school locations because the handicapped programs were dispersed over eight campuses. I was my own boss. It really was neat. The classes I had were four to five maybe six at the maximum. I am not sure how much technical stuff I taught, but we did all kinds of things from how to make change to tying their shoes. In some cases it was just an experience. The blind kids that I had, it was just an experience to be able to put their hands on something that was running, to feel this type of stuff. I did that for approximately two years and because I was free at twelve, I got a job in an automotive machine shop . I worked from twelve to five-thirty in the machine shop. One day a guy called me at work and he said, "Ed, I got this person just called me on the phone that needs somebody just like you to start a business." They wanted to start a marine servicing business. They put me on a retainer and all expenses. I worked that job for about two years.

I decided that I should get into my master's program, which I did at the state college. So while I was teaching in the morning, my business and working in the shop in the afternoons, I would go three nights a week to my master's program, which I never completed. I found the classes rather boring, they were not in touch with the latest stuff and most of them were management-type classes.

One of the people that I was riding over there with was this fellow who is now our director of co-op education here. At that time he was the vocational education coordinator at the high school. So one night we were rolling up over there he said, "Did you know that they were building a new junior college?" It was just in the dirt-breaking stages. He said, "They are going to have a small engine and marine engine program. Do you think that you might be interested?" And I said, "Sure." And he said, "Well, I know the president personally and I will put your name in." He brought me an application and I filled it out and I went in for an interview. It kind of shocked me at first. Not only was it recorded but it was also video-recorded with three people firing these questions at me. At the end of the interview I expected him to say, "Well, you will hear from us," like most interviews. He said, "You got the job." They asked me about working with minorities, and of course I related my experiences working with the handicapped and the class where I had thirty-two Black students. So I related those experiences and they hired me. It was not ready to open in September. They had hired many instructors. I needed a shop and they didn't have any shops there, so here I was employed and nowhere to teach. So the president of the college put me on as a troubleshooter working with the contractors . In the six months that I did that before I started teaching here I think I saved them about $148,000 worth of major changes that they would have had to make after the building was completed.

I had always worked real hard since I was about eleven years old. I said, "This teaching thing is not going to be bad, it is going to give me some freedom to do what I want and I can do it my way." I don't take orders very well. I find it hard to be anybody's boy for whatever reason. I like to run my own show, be in control of my own destiny, a minimal amount of constraints and controls. The other option is if I don't buy teaching I can go into middle management.

If I can't do it and I am not current then I can't teach it. Reading out of books is not doing it, and the level of student that I have to teach I have to be able to show him how to do it, or else I don't consider myself a good teacher. So the only way to do that is every summer go back into the trade and all of us do in this area. I actually went downtown and took a job as a mechanic at a regular business eight to five because there was no summer school that was good. It got me in better with the locals around here--all of a sudden more of my students started to get hired when the communities saw what I could actually do. People are somewhat skeptical of teachers you know. Now I have broken that barrier.

When I was up at the state college, living with five guys, all five of us didn't know where we were going. We used to sit around and talk about it. What kind of job, what can I do, go to business, that is where the bucks are. You weigh your freedom and your working styles, get as much information as you can, and then make your own decision. I tell my students here, I say, "Everyone of you should--the younger ones should at least--go to a four-year college, even if you don't finish, for the experience of being on your own and being around other people that have goals and fears and things in common." I think the best time in my life, bar none, is when I was going to school at the state college.

I teach several different classes. We teach the industrial engines which are the smaller ones, two and three air-cooled types of engines. We do the motorcycle stuff and then we do the marine stuff. My approach to these is pretty much the same. It is lecture-demonstration and then laboratory. I spend a lot of my time thinking about my lectures. I don't write them down on paper, they are all upstairs in the brain. I figure out exactly what I am going to say in the shower that morning before I get here. I have a format that I follow. I am constantly trying to figure out ways to make it better for the students. Just because I understand it does not mean that they are going to understand it the same way. We do some pure theory and then that is usually followed in the lab by a demonstration, by me actually doing it or showing them how; and the lab part reinforces that. I am also responsible for trying to keep this place clean and updated. I have to order all the equipment and supplies, and figure the budgets, attend the meetings that they have around here, keep office hours. I do the normal shop thing and maintain things, and correct papers, and grade papers, and do hand-outs, give assignments.

When collective bargaining came in I got involved with the union. I am the treasurer of our faculty union and have been for the last four years. My commitment is more an institution-wide commitment than to one particular sector. That takes up a lot of time. I have a secretary that helps me, and it is a pretty big job.

I am also responsible for a lot of stuff that has to run. In other words it is not like a biology class where you screw the frog up and you throw it away because it is no longer any good. You make a mistake around here, this is very expensive equipment. A lot of the students working on it are beginning, they are learning and they are going to make mistakes. I have to be very careful and know what I am doing, otherwise they would tear this stuff up right now and then you have nothing to work with. I also run this as a live shop, which means that we take in a lot of outside work--these boats and these cars that you see, they are not playthings, they are real things. My students will work on them and put them back together, but they have got to do it right. So there is a responsibility on my part, to make sure that the things they do in this type of situation are correct. I figure that sooner or later they have got to take that responsibility and they had better take it in here. We try to make it as close to a working situation as we possibly can without getting the people in the community all upset about competing.

The students coming to me do not have the academic preparation. I find a lot tend to come into it because they think that they can do nothing else. They find out different. They have to pass reading and writing requirements in this class, plus mathematics if they are going to stay. I spend a lot of time working with my students, reading and writing especially, to bring them up to a level where they could succeed in this business. I am not trying to put them through a four-year institution, but there is a certain minimal requirement. What I am saying basically is the young students coming here are not in my estimation where they should be. The other clientele that I get are the older people. I get a lot of older people either that came back for retraining because of injury or I get a lot of retired people who have put twenty years in service and are not thirty-eight. They are getting some kind of pension but they need something to back that up. These guys know exactly what they want. The kids sometimes can't see the rhyme or reason of what you are trying to do . But that is part of it and that is what I am here for. You know not everybody can be a mechanic. How do you know unless you get involved in something and this is the place to do it. So it is a really crazy cross-section that I get. I got one man now who is seventy-eight years old in my night class and he is sharp as a tack. Slow but he gets things done and he gets them done right. The youngest would be seventeen, still in high school, trying to get some advanced training. The first of every class I give an examination that I developed, and I determine the ones that are really having problems. I get some people that can hardly even write that are twenty years old, been in the service and back out. I have to take them aside and level with them and tell them that they are not going to make it. Most of them know that they have that problem. We have a tutoring program where tutors work with the students right outside this room on their assignments in here. They help them with reading the textbooks here. The same is true with mathematics. I identify the problems and then the math lab is set up to help.

I tell all the students that the amount of money that they are going to make is going to be directly tied to responsibility that they are willing to take and that is going to be directly tied to the amount of education that they have. Don't get me wrong. I would like to see all of my students go through the academic stuff. I push for that and they won't, for whatever reason. I get a lot of guys that you give the first test and they are gone. I know pretty much what is happening and I say that we have to talk. So we will go in here and shut the door. The student says, "I didn't show up for the test yesterday because I have not taken a test in five years, and I don't read very well and I don't spell very well." And I try to calm their fears and say, "Hey, that is okay. I still want you to take the test and give it your best shot," and then we will work and see what we can do about that and I will inform them of the tutoring.

I tell them that somewhere down the line they are going to have to bring up their reading and writing. It is imperative. You go work as a mechanic and the next step up is the service writer and above the service writer is the service manager. I say, "I am the only one that sees this stuff," and I say, "I am not so interested that you spell everything correctly right now or that your sentence structure is not good, but I want you to give it a try because what I am looking for is your thoughts, if you are getting the mechanical aspect of what I am trying to put across. We will work on the reading and the writing later." I can usually get them to do it and in most cases the fear will go away after awhile. And we will get them involved with a tutor. All my tests are not true-false--I make my students write. The stigma that a mechanic can't read or write bothers me and so I really make that thrust that you have got to be able to read. Our books get highly technical. Some you never get to. They just disappear, especially when you have a class of forty. Maybe they didn't want to be a mechanic. We get a lot of kids that come and sign up because it is what their parents told them to do after high school. It is a kind of natural step. They are here for a while and decide this is not where they want to be and so they leave.

The person that is in here that can't read or write very well and will never make it in a four-year institution, if they had the opportunity, unless they could bring those skills up--I lean on them a little bit heavier to develop more of the actual skills for flat-rate time. I make them work harder because I know that type of individual, as soon as he gets a phone call for a job, is going to want to leave the program. So while I have him I figure the best thing that I can do for him is to teach him as much as I can.

I have very few people complete the two years in my program. The people that come to me are striving for a job, just a job in general, maybe the first one that they have ever had. Or they have had a series of jobs that never lasted more than three or four months. They are looking for some kind of a skill to get them a little bit more stability in their life. Some people learn enough in a year that they can land a job. If I feel that they are good enough and an employer calls me, I will send them. They get the job and they are done with me. They may come back at night or later for further education, but I see my particular function to not try to keep them around for two years. They get a job and they are gone.

They go lots of places. Basically they go to work for garages and they go into automotive parts houses. The people that go on, they get in the better jobs, the auto plant and teaching. Students go to work at Sears, Penney's Service Centers, service industry jobs. I identify with the ones that are willing to work for what they want. I have trouble identifying with the ones that sit back and complain and are not willing to do anything to change it. I get students and find them a job and it is $7.50 an hour. They say I can't go to work for $7.50 an hour. I say, okay, that is it, and I won't send them out on another one. But a student that is willing to work, I will do everything that I can for.

You get that September rush. I would say that initially, out of forty that begin this class, probably at least twenty are enrolled in other types of classes, not a full load maybe, but they may pick up a math or an English . Midway through the semester the number is probably down to about twenty-five. From that original forty we are about down to twenty-five. Forty in here is unworkable but we load it up that way because we know what is going to happen. After it stabilizes, about halfway through the semester, out of that twenty-five to twenty-eight, maybe eight of them are still taking other classes. Only five out of that eight are doing general education. I try to get my people and enroll them in the welding or electricity, so that puts them into other classes; but I don't term that as general education.

The young man that was just in here is going to transfer on to State. He has been through my program and he is smart enough to go to a four-year institution. I have those people and I do treat them a little bit differently. Only about five individuals like that. The other people are picking it up for some type of survival background.

After teaching in a high school, you are not a baby sitter. High school is like a holding pattern, and especially in the shops, because in the high schools around here they use the shops for a dumping ground. If you have Johnny and you can't handle him, you put him to working with the custodian or you put him in three periods of wood shop and you let the wood shop control him. Around here that is not the case. The ones that stay are highly motivated to learn. They get so much information and so many technical aspects that they sometimes get frustrated. There is so much to learn in this business in two years and I tell them that they can't learn it all, but at least they can get a good start. They are eager and they want to know because they have a real need to know. They listen and ask questions. If I was still teaching in the high school, from what I see today, I don't think that I would be teaching, I would be gone. I don't think I would be an overpriced babysitter. I don't think that it is the teacher's fault. The teacher can't kick them out because they send them home and the county sends them back to school. Around here I tell everybody from the first day, "If you don't like it, you can leave at any time. Here is the door. If you want to stay, you know I will do my best to show you what I know and to teach you." We get it straight from the start. I will drop you and I will do it myself.

Part of the function of education is more than just an academic type of thing. We need a lot of technicians and there is really nowhere to get this level of training other than a junior college . A person goes to apply for a job, you know, and they say, "What experience have you had and what schooling?" And they say, "No, I have not had any." And they say, "Well, we are sorry." So where do you start? I think part of the function of education is not simply teaching people how to read and write but it is also teaching those people that want it a specific trade or a specific skill. We can't all be brain surgeons. We need mechanics, we need good mechanics. We need good service people.

My enrollment has never been down since day one and we are a small school. This is a small area. I thought that maybe we would saturate it with small-engine mechanics and people taking these types of courses. It just amazes me. I think that is a very important part of this school and I keep telling the president and everybody else every time I get a chance. Because in many cases they water down voc-tech and they like to kind of hide that out back somewhere, as somebody's ugly stepsister, so to speak.

I get along with the rest of the faculty real well. I am one of the faculty leaders because I am in the union. I am in contact with most of the faculty all the time and in many cases have to represent them. I do that well because I have never been one that is frightened of any type of authority figures. That is my particularly personality so I kind of got picked up as a faculty leader. I don't know how it started. When I was going to school we talked a lot about that in my field. A long time ago when they used to call industrial arts manual arts, the type of people that they put into that were the ones that they didn't think could make it academically. Academic people (not all of them) sometimes tend to think they might be just a little bit above you because you are doing something like this. That does not exist around here. Number one, I would match my brain and wits with any of the academic people. I don't cower away from them and I am not afraid to get involved with them. When we were first hired we went to these workshops and these meetings, and we all got to know each other and to understand each other and what we were teaching and what we were trying to do. If you don't get involved in things around the campus, which is normally done by the academic people, they tend to start looking down on you.

When they started this school everybody thought that because of the geographic boundaries that this was going to be the vocational-technical school because here we are where there is industry. The word started to spread, you know, there are great vocational classes over there. The president has fought for the last five years to change that image, but it is hard to erase that stigma from within a community. It is starting to work now as we have students that have left and have gone to four-year institutions and are coming back to the community. We are very visible.

[About committee work], it seemed to me that that was something that did have to be done that I couldn't stand dealing with. You know how committees work--sit around and listen to people and after the end of three hours you are no better off . I am a man of decision. I will listen to everybody but let us take some action. With the union we are doing something that is substantive. If there is a problem, twelve rational people deal with it. I am still involved in the Faculty Senate. That functions much like our union does--that is, a group of six or seven people.

Some of the teachers are good maybe in their field, but you know, they can't balance their checkbooks, they have trouble getting their shoes tied. Some of them are very bright but they are living in a different world. I consider myself a regular guy and practical as hell. I tell my students that maybe I can never figure out a theory of relativity but I can deal with what I have to deal with, a real world sense. I am real world, money talks. We are constantly talking money. People think that I am capitalistic; I tell them yes, that I am. When my student leaves here I want him to know how it is going to really be out there, not how it should be. The social scientist can deal with how things should be but my students have to know how it is. You know you can't eat social change and you don't put clothes on your wife's back and your kid's back sitting around pondering . I am talking about dealing with people who don't have jobs and who are looking for them. That is what they come here for.

I am pretty much where I want to be. I have gotten out of the empire building. I knew what I wanted and I knew what the minimum level was and I went past that minimal level. I have got what I want and I don't want anymore. I am happy and I have plenty. I have a wife and two beautiful children and I have a home, and I can afford to drive new cars. I am doing what I want to do and I am able to maintain all of that. I do enjoy this job and that is really important to me because I have had jobs that paid well that I didn't enjoy. I see people all around me that go to work eight hours a day, five days a week, and they don't have a good time. I have a good time out here.

My area is included with mathematics, and nursing, physical science and chemistry. We have what we call a sub-area,"sub-area" being the voc-tech, and we make all the decisions and just submit them to the dean. We develop our budget and we hire the part-timers and we schedule and he just kind of oversees it. If there is a problem he steps in. He is a manager, he has to give us certain paper work and make us aware of certain deadlines. Our schedules have to be on file, our grade rosters have to be turned in. He used to be a teacher and he was moved up through the aspiring ladder and became a dean and I wouldn't have the job for all the tea in China. It is a terrible job. A logical step if you climb the ladder would be to become a dean, which is highly possible for me because of the fact that they have never had a vocational-technical one. I don't want to do that. I am not a paper-pusher at all. If I decide that it gets to me, this job --burn out--and I don't see that happening for a few more years anyway, then I will go do something else.

I am getting tired of living here. Too many people, too much crime and violence starting to occur that was never here. You see I was born here. You know I remember when my dad had the only service station in town. There was clean air and you could drive around and not get into traffic jams.

We never had anything when I was a kid. It has only been recently that things have paid off for my father. He bought in on this little Mobil station. He saved up some money in the service and came back and bought his first house and paid $4,800 for it. He worked his butt off. He looks older now than he really should look for his age. My mother always worked too and now they don't have to work anymore. He doesn't do engine work anymore and he doesn't get into transmission work and the heavy work. Now he goes to work at six in the morning and comes home at twelve noon.

I have had so many jobs in my lifetime and this is probably the best one that I have had, without a doubt. But I might start my own business. Life is exciting--if you get tired of it, go do something else. If I need to I have the money to do it. You see vocational teachers are never trapped. I tell my students that. That is the one thing about having a trade. They can snatch a white-collar job out from underneath you real quick , but if you have a salable trade there is somewhere that you can always go to work. I guess my job means security. It is important to me because I have a message to get across. I think I am highly talented in my field and I want to pass it along. This is the best way I know. I think I bring some reality to this institution that is lost, maybe, in the other classes. And so I think that I have a real function; teaching this class is much like teaching a biology class. We are not working on frogs, we are working on motors. I tell my students about my background. I tell them I am as talented as a doctor. He is working on people and I am working on something mechanical. And in many cases it is just as highly complex.

Profile

SCOTT MULLER

(Scott Muller is a professor of machine technology at a community college in New York State. We interviewed him twice in his office and once at his home in the fall of 1981.)

I think I subconsciously had visions of always teaching, no matter what I had decided to do, what my interests were. Consciously I saw myself as showing other people how to do it or devising ways to help other people to be more effective. It's one of the few humane professions on the face of the earth. In other words, there is enough time to be creative, there is enough space to be creative in. I have the option of pursuing my professional goals as a teacher or I have the option of becoming someone else, a period of time long enough to become someone else, then come back into my professional life, rejuvenated.

For five years I lived with my mother and my brother, through a period of social decline in our lives. There was no authority figure at home and no open or honest communication, no instruction in life essentially. My father decided to see if he could win custody. Fortunately for my brother and myself he did. At that point we moved from our little hamlet in Vermont to upstate New York. At that time I was twelve and I had become acquainted with a farmer in Vermont with a very healthy attitude toward life. I worked for him summers and I'd stay there for weeks at a time and I'd make a bit of money and I loved the work. My father remarried. Unfortunately he was still a rather poor communicator and inflexible . By the time I was an adolescent--fifteen, sixteen years old--I was gone, moved out of the house then lived with a friend and for a year lived in southern California.

In Vermont it was the dairy farm. We'd be up at five and be two hours of strenuous work and then a breakfast and then fixing this and that, the machinery. A lot of equipment needed to be maintained, fences to be mended. Driving tractors and lifting hay bales. The cycles were very nice, the rhythm of farm life. You're watching a cow give birth and it's not the kind of thing you can watch as a ten-year-old and not have some questions about it. At that point I was a farm kid, I looked like a farm kid. I was imagining a slightly more affluent existence. Those five years in Vermont with my mother were relatively poverty-stricken and I think at two different points we were on welfare.

When I came to New York I was put in a relatively large junior high school and I was appalled at the lack of discipline, the lack of achievement. I was a dummy from Vermont, which was basically their guidance view. They put me in a lower academic rank; and not only was I a little shocked by the institution, I was very unhappy with the position they had assigned. So I proceeded to make a jerk of myself as a seventh grader, criticizing my environment and alienating everyone around me. It was six months before I caught on. The homeroom instructor would be saying, "I've had enough of this breaking windows on the playground." I'd raise my hand, I'd say, "In Vermont they never broke them."

In the upstate New York school it was social strata too, there were very clearly different behavior patterns from room to room. The kids between 8-1 and 8-2 knew that they were from upper middle-class families, behaved and dressed in a certain way, and the kids in 8-5 and 8-6 knew that they were the outcasts and they adopted that outcast attitude. They were reactionaries, they were rebels. They didn't care about school and they didn't care what they looked like, not necessarily because they were brought up that way. I think more because that was the slot they were filling at school. Now around the middle of the first year I went to my guidance counselor. I covered all this material, I covered this material a year and a half ago, I knew math, I had advanced studies. I said could I possibly change something here. "Well, I think we would like to keep you where you are, check you out for a year." I went back to the guidance counselor and said, "I'm not going to get good grades because I'm bored. I just want to be in one of the other classes." They kept me in there until the end of the year. He said, "There is no way we can switch you around." He wasn't hearing anything. I was nothing but an administrative problem to him at that point. I was polite. I spoke as a little adult to big adults. But I was persistent. I would say it two or three times and I'd see them start to get mad and I would go, okay, I have played it out. You do not want to get a big adult mad.

That community is a relatively upper middle-class, affluent community where a lot of the kids tend to have a good academic background and go skiing every Saturday. I was on the ski team. I played tennis. I was doing all the things that made you at least look normal even if you didn't feel that things were normal. I had a paper route. I loved it--get up at five in the morning and walk around town, it's so pleasant and quiet. I thought I was ready to leave school when I was a sophomore actually. I thought graduation could have easily been conducted at the end of the sophomore year. In my town the teachers were very academically oriented and unless you achieved academically, unless you fit their profile, you didn't have any conversations with them. You didn't have any opportunities to extend your experience. I have friends that teach there now. They're the same way. One reason I'm in a vocational program, probably. A lot of instructors say, "I don't want to teach those dummies." I don't look at it as an academic chore; a lot of them are anything but dummies, they've been tracked differently than you and me.

I had a rather nice guidance counselor in high school. She liked kids. However misguided she was, she liked kids. She had a very simplistic view of guidance. You were either college material or you weren't, and she didn't hold it against a kid if he wasn't. She just tried to track them in other ways. Well, I was college material according to my testing so we were to pick out a college, whether or not I was to go or how much it would cost or anything like that. I think I had a good deal more life experience by the time I got out of high school than most of my peers had. And I think I realized that to proceed with another four years of academic life without any real idea of what I was going to do with it or what was out there to be done was a mistake. At that point I knew I had to go to school because I didn't want to be a cook forever, it was as simple as that. I also knew that I wanted to get a technical education because it related to my environmental interests. I chose this community college. After I was here I was sure I made a good decision because the instruction was very good and the attention was very personal. I was very happy with it.

I took mechanical technology, which is pre-engineering basically, and I took it with an option in air conditioning design. My instructor, he and I are working on a grant project right now, I had the best of relationships with him as a student, and he has always been very supportive of me and my work since I have come back. I had a physics instructor. As far as teaching someone physics, it's questionable how much he gets across because he is just at another level. I was interested enough in him to find out what else he did. That was one of my adoration relationships, the guy could do no wrong. I was so in awe of his abilities that I just loved to be around him.

So I went to the community college, married, completed my two years, then we moved to Denver for a year, came back from Denver and completed three more years at the state university in Environmental Science. I got my B.S. At that point I had two options: I could either work for the government and go after Dow Chemical or I could work for Dow Chemical. Decided to get some education credits with the possibility of teaching what I already knew. About halfway through my graduate program, came back over to the community college, talked with a professor who liked me when I was a student. I was in the position of possibly searching out a teaching job or going into industry. They had more enrollment here than they had faculty so I should put in an application. I've been here ever since.

I spend most of my time teaching. Right now my teaching assignment consists of three courses. A theory course that meets once a week for two hours. I thoroughly disapprove of classes for more than an hour. I think the human attention span doesn't tolerate it, especially in technical material. Especially with my kind of student, you need to give them smaller bites to digest. That course is very tough on the students and tough on me because they are always wondering just how far we are going to go, what's expected of them. So each time we meet there is a lot of communication about when is the next test going to be, what is it going to cover, that kind of thing. If I saw them every other day it would be a little easier.

We are stuck with these two-hour sessions, they are marathons. You can just see the blood drain from their face after about an hour and a half. Every Friday I take the first hour of the two-hour session and make sure I address a topic that is emotionally, motivationally, and on a gut level pertinent to my students. It doesn't have to be technical. It is a pattern I have developed over the last year. It started when I saw that I had two students troubleshooting a piece of equipment in the lab, and when they get to be seniors they know just enough to feel that they know a lot more. And they think they know enough to figure anything out. With that preconception they very often block the real problem in the system. They can't really accept that they haven't come to a solution yet. They keep back tracking or insisting they were right . I wanted them to realize when they're trouble-shooting a system they taking nothing but their pure intelligence into it. Some of them, it scares them that they can't bring any thing with them, and to me the next step is to show them that it's a pure aesthetic educational experience because you are working with nothing but your perception. It is almost like sculpting. You just have this pile of clay and you are forming it, only you are forming in your mind.

What I wanted to do was to get the ones who were having trouble with their troubleshooting attitude to recognize that they don't have to carry those burdens with them. They can be an "ignorant" unknowing student and that is really a good mode to be in, that is a very pleasant experience. They don't have to always know. It is funny, because there were about four or five of the tougher guys that resisted. They keep showing up and it is like they are there to dispel and disprove. They do not like this soft science approach but they got dragged into it almost against their will: "Yeah, but I am not like that," that kind of approach. I try to get them thinking about who they are and where they are going or where they are possibly not going. We were talking about economics. Economics to me is just some huge micro-organism that is growing. It is like biology. I wanted them to know--I said, "What are your chances? You are in a very high growth field right now. You have a very good chance of at least getting entry-level employment-- second fastest growing technological field in the country, next to computer science." Through a few linkages that I made, their jaws dropped a little bit when they realized that of all the people a shrinking economy can hurt, it is the entry-level graduate. He is the one that is locked out. So suddenly they go from a high-growth field to a no-entry field.

The larger context that I brought was that technical education is not enough, skills are not enough. You have to have not only a general eduction, but you have to have some sense of self that transcends whatever you are doing. You have to have an idea of not just what your mind is but who you are . Technical students have an orientation toward discrete answers and that is a false orientation. Technologies are not any more discrete than humanities. They can be made discrete through discrete study but when it comes right down to the application of technology to life, there is no right or wrong. There are always grey areas. I thought they had to get that. I had a technical orientation. One reason I liked technology, because it kept all that space occupied. In studying physics you do not have a whole lot of extra, mental space to play with when you are reading a book or doing your homework. It is very aesthetic, working out problems.

When I went to apply my knowledge to equipment, when I went to fix or install or build, I found that the sheer physical work of it could overpower you mentally. You would lose that aesthetic level very quickly. When I was a service technician for Montgomery Ward, they expected you to fix anything they ever sold. They put you in a little truck and gave you a work order and said, "Go fix this, fix that," with no training whatsoever. If you were to survive on the job you started reading a lot. You ended up developing some kind of positive approach to what you were doing. Drudgery was jumping in a little truck driving an hour and a half, going in some hovel where they had a washing machine that was twenty years old that they built the kitchen around, I mean there is counters on all sides of it, cupboards above it, you couldn't even tip the thing forward. You arrive and there is a big puddle of water around it and for $19.95 they want you to fix it. You have to explain to them that this looks like a serious problem because if you stand too close to the washer, it's going to drop through the floor, it is so rotten, it has been leaking for so long. The only reason they have called you is because it literally cannot keep water in it anymore to wash their clothes. There is the other end--someone who has had a little tiny problem and they call you over to fix it boom, like that. And then to go back to the shop and know full well that they wouldn't collect on it, the check would bounce.

The heat transfer lab meets for three three-hour sessions a week, and it is one of the pure delights of teaching. You get the hands-on, the best instructional mode by far. Hands-on is to teaching mechanics or teaching a technical subject what an encounter session is to teaching interpersonal dynamics. There is no substitute. You have got to have the direct experience.

The students have projects in which they are immersed. To recognize when a student is burned out by one project and get him interested in another, mostly one-on-one instruction. You are dealing with one lab group and you are trying to get them to define the problem and organize the solution. I like working on the equipment. I like troubleshooting, I like seeing things work as a result of the thought processes. We have to teach them how to use a meter, how to use wrenches even. It is amazing how many people cannot use wrenches. You just take it for granted if you have been doing it for twenty years. They build the simplest of systems that , when they plug it in, tosses heat out here and picks it up here. They take basic theory measurements such as temperature, pressure, and mass flow rates. Then they start to tackle controls. For instance, a refrigerator eventually needs to be defrosted. There is a whole series of controls required to do that, and different piping. So after they build the system, we have them sophisticate it with various assignments and then after they have their simple little systems built, we have them work on the commercial systems we have purchased. That is all real equipment. We have data simulators. They cost about $7,000 a piece. It is a solid-state simulator of a system with meters built in so that you take electrical readings and do trouble shooting.

I can remember being in school and still thinking your primary motivation is job placement. You are thinking, I am doing this because it is practical, because I want to feed myself. I can relate to that behavior. A lot of my mature students, "retreads" as I call them, that are coming back for additional education have that as their goal, a saleable skill. You have to respect that; they make the best students as far as absorbing. They always do the homework. As far as some of the kids right out of high school, I don't have a disciplinary problem but I can tell when I have attitudes kind of floating around the back of the room. For instance, you assign material prior to a test, and it is a good chunk of material. You can see where it represents three or four hours of study, easily. They moan a little bit, it is almost an involuntary response when they get the assignment. The mature student looks forward to crunching out the grade, that sense of progress, he doesn't moan so much. The one that moans so much is the one that feels that this is uncontrollable . He has got to study again. I can verbalize to them that there are other reasons for taking this test, other than to victimize them. They should look at it as a learning experience, and it is a way to validate their abilities. In the back of my head I know how they feel. I know that they are not working in the same context as a more motivated student so they feel victimized. They are constantly struggling with that question, "Is this worth it?" They have not made that decision. They are there, but they really haven't on a gut level said, "I am here because I want to be." They have yet to really give in to that and force themselves to make that decision. I mean if everyone sat down for about ten minutes and said, "At the end of ten minutes I have got to decide whether or not I am committed to what I am doing," you can imagine the shuffle at the end of ten minutes, because I think an awful lot of people would have to change. But most people don't confront themselves like that, and students are no exception so they just kind of dribble along in the process.

The orientation that these students have is a result of people telling them that they are not strong in math and science. Their parents probably aren't employed in technical fields. Most of them are blue-collar workers. These kids aren't necessarily low-I.Q. Many of them have never been convinced by their school system or their parents they should or could achieve academic excellence. One of the nice things about what I teach is it doesn't really rely on anything else. I teach them how to use a meter. I teach them Ohm's Law. I show them enough algebra to manipulate a few equations. We are really starting from ground zero, so I feel I get a pretty true picture of raw, animal intelligence in the kid. By the time they are troubleshooting a system, they are holding three or four elements in their mind, doing some minor manipulations, and some pretty demanding memory work, they have got to remember where they have been and where they are going. I don't see any difference in their intelligence, with very few exceptions, any difference between them and the engineering students.

I have a student, he is my only minority student in the class. I have been aware since the first day that I have had him in my class that he lacks self-confidence. Very, very quiet kid, very nice kid, but just not at all convinced that he is ever going to grasp this material. Unfortunately I think he is one of these people that somehow has been hoodwinked into thinking that after fifteen weeks you will know it all, and he doesn't realize that the process is very important, getting there is as educational as knowing it at the end. I've tried to point how successful he is. He has a high B average because he is willing to do the work and he is willing to accept the fact that it needs to be done in a certain systematic way. He doesn't assume anything about it. He just takes it at face value each day and looks at it. But at the same time I'm trying to relax him enough to make him recognize his own progress. Hopefully everyone gets to that point by themselves, but I like to accelerate that process by saying, "Listen, you are doing fine. Look at what you have done." Try to build up his self confidence so perhaps he can achieve more. But in one sense it is frustrating because I haven't been successful. He still thinks he doesn't know a thing, and it may be two or three years before he realizes how much he has learned.

One of the frustrating parts of teaching a vocational student or someone without self-confidence in technologies is that many of them have a defeatist attitude. You have to spend a year or two overcoming that. I am still in the stage where I am recognizing it. I am able to recognize the person that is working off the negative instead of the positive, and what is holding him back. I am trying to justify the fact that these kids could do more than society expects them to. They have been tracked, they have been conditioned by their families. I think they are much more capable ; however, I get some kids that are just academically almost out of the system. They can just barely stay in the classroom, and usually the problem is memory. They just can't retain more than one or two elements at a time. They can't refer back to what they don't have. When you have got a system with fifty elements and you can't keep two of them in your head at a time--from the day I recognize that, where,I say, can I get this guy a job at a parts counter? How do I orient him to a job where he is not going to be a failure? So I am also trying to say that I recognize that ability has a role to play and if they are not able to handle long division in third grade, chances are that relates to their ability, not just orientation . I have examples of both in my own background. My school system telling me I was, as a young student, capable of anything I wanted to do technically. Later on my school system said, "I am sorry, you have gone as far as you are going to go." I have had the experience of school tracking. I felt that right through, I wasn't oriented academically. I talk to my students a lot. A kid will express a defeatist attitude, I'll say, "Where did you pick that up anyway--your father tell you that? A teacher tell you that? Someone told you you can't do this? I haven't told you, who's telling you? Are you telling you?" I'll try to reduce it to that level. I get a constant education as to the orientation of my students by talking with my students.

Most of them are very reluctant to talk about communication with their fathers. These guys don't want to talk about their dads in any way, it seems. They will talk about their mothers saying, "You should be stable, you should get a job," that kind of thing, but they don't want to talk about their fathers. I think the fathers' careers are a very touchy subject . They are very willing to talk about school and the injustices of grade school, junior high school and high school and the social problems, the social cliques, that they were excluded from. They were all aware of social exclusion . I would not say any of them are destined to be drudges. It will depend a lot on their perception of their jobs. A lot of them will work for small to medium size business where your boss, your foreman will get every inch out of you that he can. Every calorie in your body, he will ask you to give. It will be up to the graduates to say this is all I have got to give and this is the quality of work I am going to do, and this is the pace at which I am going to do it.

I think it takes a lot of ability and a lot of adjustment, personal adjustment to be a good technician. Technicians are not respected as they would be, say, in Europe, as a tradesman or a craftsman. Here they are underpaid and there is no job security. There is no equation between a maintenance person or a service person and a custodian, and a lot of people in this country see that as they are almost equivalent roles. You are in a building at night, you must be emptying the wastebaskets. A good car mechanic in Europe is a very well respected individual. Because most of them are well trained and they have more training and factory experience than a lot of them get here. I still maintain a good technician has to be thinking about six hours a day and doing this manipulatively two hours a day. I don't know many professions where that is true. The first thing I tell my students when they are approaching an area that is complicated, I say remember for every ten minutes you should be thinking an hour. If you don't feel comfortable sitting in front of a customer thinking, doing drawings, and really working through the problem, then get in a truck, make an excuse, get out of there. That is another problem--when you are paying someone fifty dollars an hour the last thing you want to see them do is sit down and think, but that is the most productive mode they can be in. They want to see them working like crazy, tote that barge, haul that bale.

I try to make sure my students don't feel limitations especially because they seem to have been relegated to the lower academic rungs by public view or academic view. Vocational programs tend to be a first and last stop in a lot of people's minds. So if anything, I try to convince them that this doesn't have to be their last stop, that this learning can be the beginning of continually turning themselves on to it. I want to make sure that they don't perceive this as their only shot at it. They have lousy English skills, terrible. Now English skills are something you learn, you develop, they become reflections. It is like having a mirror constantly build your mind up. They have not ever developed that skill and, as an result, they are almost atrophied in that area. Most of their families have told them, or shown them indirectly, that they are not going to be doctors and lawyers, that they are going to be part of the working class. Their perception of the working class, the blue-collar workers, may or may not be pleasant. Some of them view it as being very unpleasant, but they see themselves relegated to it.

The classroom experience is fine, there is no problem there. I don't mind the preparation. I get good feedback from the students, I get a sense of progress and all that; but I am always looking for something a little more stimulating on a professional level. It is like I am always working it out from the ground level rather than getting an easy answer. I have decided maybe I will write something. I feel that my approach is not a common one. Sometimes it is nice to be different. Sometimes just teaching is lonely in itself regardless of how you do it. There are levels of lonely, and I think everyone goes through little mini-cycles of burnout. Around Thanksgiving everyone is going through a mini-burnout cycle, and when you feel stress you feel that you are at the end of your wits. Then you start to lose your enthusiasm with the students, you start to lose your curiosity about teaching techniques, you are not going into the class looking forward to being with people, you are going into class looking forward to getting through to the next lecture. When it reduces itself to that level then that can be lonely. I feel sometimes professionally lonely. I feel that I may have a sense of quality that either I am too naive to give up right now or that no one else shares.

Profile

LEONARD BRADDOCK

(Leonard Braddock, a man in his fifties, teaches in a technology testing program in a community college in a mid-sized city in New York State. He was interviewed twice in his office and once in his home in the winter of 1981.)

I was born in a small town . My father was a school teacher. My mother was a registered nurse. I attended a variety of different elementary schools as a consequence of my father changing positions so many times. Following graduation from high school I stumbled around a bit, found myself in the Navy as an enlisted volunteer. I got out of active duty and was headed towards college when somehow in the interim I decided that I should get married. That pre-empted my going to college, for a time at least. I took a job with a company in 1952 and started going to college in the evenings and as a part-time special student in the daytime. I managed to finish about three full years towards a B.S. in physics. Then the work situation for me at the company got very complex in terms of travel requirements and it looked like there wasn't going to be a real strong opportunity for me to finish my bachelor's degree. So I found a job in Denver and transferred my educational program to the University of Denver. I finally got my degree in mathematics rather than physics. I pursued some consulting activity with some local companies which worked out pretty well for a couple of years.

At this point I had three children that potentially wanted to go to college. I had been working on my master's degree at a state university in the northeast. Looking at the prospect of three children going to school, potentially two at one time, and the expenses related to it, I just found that I wasn't making enough money. I wasn't able to do the amount of consulting that I had done in previous years because of my commitments to the graduate school program. So I left the university and I took a position as a senior engineer with a company in Boston. I spent four years working in the Boston area. I also taught part-time at an excellent technical college.

I had kept a constant friendship going with this fellow from one of the universities. They received a request for a proposal, and it looked like a really good opportunity for me to go back and work through the research foundation at a salary which would be competitive with what I had made in industry. Wouldn't have to do all that traveling, and I had the prospect of finishing my master's degree. Plus the fact that I would have an opportunity to get back on the faculty and all of that sounded appealing. So I went back to the university and got located in an office and everything was going well. Well, it got down to the final stages and we lost the contract. So now I am sitting at the university with no job.

And as luck would have it, one of my daughters developed a very serious illness and she had an operation which cost a very substantial amount of money which I had to pay for myself because I didn't have any insurance at that point. It was cancer, and fortunately that was five years ago and she is purportedly beyond the big risk factor . Apparently if you can survive without further problems for five years, they regard you to be essentially cured. She had that first operation, she was facing a second operation. I have a brother-in-law who knew about a job opening that he had heard of. I began to look at the insurance aspects of whether or not my coming to work for the company again would cover me for potential future operations that my daughter might have--at that time they were projecting that she would have serious illness and her likelihood of survival for five years was not considered very good. So I took the job and we were uprooted and moved back here.

I started working in the capacity of manager of non-destructive testing. I had about two hundred people certified to perform non-destructive tests, all over the country. I was responsible for technical aspects of the materials of non-destructive testing which led me to travel almost continuously. I would leave on a Sunday and not get home until about late Friday night many weeks, and this got to a point where it was beginning to affect my health. I decided that it wasn't worth it. They had called me while I was working there at the company from the school here, asking me to come up and lend a hand in developing curriculum for what was then a very new program. It had been in existence one year at that point. And so I agreed to do that and met with the department head here for lunch. They wanted the program, they thought it would be a big boon to them in terms of availability of personnel and so forth.

I had been talking with another company about some consulting services that they wanted me to supply, they wanted me as an individual. I got to thinking about this position here and the prospects for obtaining that consulting job and wondered if I could kind of merge the two together . So I decided that I would make a shot at trying to get this job and tie all those loose ends together so that I would have the consulting position and the teaching position at the same time. So here I am.

During the thirties when my father was teaching in elementary schools, it seemed like he was making a salary of one hundred dollars a month and if somebody came along and offered you one hundred and twenty dollars a month, you were quick to grab it because that was a big increase. And the consequence of that was, it seemed to me, we were uprooted often. When World War II came along, he left teaching and went into a defense industry. And never went back into teaching after that.

I had just barely turned seventeen when I graduated from high school. Maybe I could have done better if I had the motivation to do it. I was concerned enough in any given year to want to proceed to the next year, but, come fall, I just didn't have the mature attitude enough to want to achieve great things. I used to work summers. I had two or three jobs when I was going to high school. I was setting up pins, cleaning out offices, peddling papers. I would do all of these things at once, and in the summer I worked on a farm every year all the way through high school including the year after I graduated. I just liked hard work. I was a glutton for it. In ninth grade I was very interested in sports and I went out for junior varsity everything. I was doing pretty well in it, but I suddenly lost interest in it and began to pick up on this working. I can't really put my finger on why I became so dedicated to working and chasing dollars . My parents were trying to survive during the depression and those were tough years.

I can remember spending a lot of time [illegible] the cloak room because of scrapes in the school yard. I liked to have nice clothes and I was willing to work to pay for them. I liked nice bicycles and I bought and paid for those. I guess I pretty much wanted to be on my own and, you know, you kind of get the notion I am earning this money, if I want to buy clothes with it, I will, and I did. And then I saved my money and bought an automobile. I bought this 1928 Essex from an old lady who had it stored in her garage and it had been there with 1930 plates on it and I got it out and worked on it.

I guess when I really got interested in learning and going to school was when I worked at the Power Company and my friend encouraged me to go to college. He was doing his master's work in physics. I went and I took mathematics and physics to start with, and I really enjoyed physics there. I got straight A's in the physics program for engineers and scientists. I had taken an exam in the Navy and scored pretty well on it so they sent me to aviation school. Of course you don't get to be an expert at it in one year, but I enjoyed it. I really liked the Navy. I wanted to go to college when I got out of the Navy and found out that I was deficient in things and so in December I went and took physics, I took advanced algebra, solid geometry. I did all the studying for all these courses to catch up with everybody else and I started in December. I hate to say it, but I got the highest mark in the class. I was working full-time so that I could afford to go to school. I worked from two till ten. I went to school from like eight in the morning until one o'clock.

That was after I got out of the navy and my wife and I were engaged at that point. I finally decided that I would go to school part-time and I would get married. I wasn't eligible for the many GI benefits because this was after any eligibility for World War II benefits. So my wife and I had to pay for my education as I went along. But fortunately I was at the Power Company. I could be reimbursed for courses that you could identify as being specifically related to your work.

I never had much of a college experience in Denver, I was just too busy. I used to have to sign a paper saying that I did not have a part-time job because I was taking overloads every quarter. I figured that's not a lie; I don't have a part-time job, I have a full-time job. I was probably hitting B's in all those social sciences and history and other courses that I needed. And I really enjoyed history. I think if I had been younger, maybe nineteen or twenty, some of those courses would have been a drag for me; but I was thirty-one years old and I was at a point where I began to realize that these were interesting things. I was always glad that I had a B.S. in the arts and sciences area rather than in engineering because I had an opportunity to take so many of those courses. It took me ten years to get a bachelor's degree and here I am struggling and messing around with this graduate degree and I really am getting tired of it. Without a master's degree I would never be promoted to above an instructor at the university. So that kind of helped me in my decision to take the job in industry.

We have a technology program that I principally coordinate for the school. It is a unique program. It got started because of interests and influence of the local power company where they used to employ some one hundred and fifty people in the testing field. I was not here the first year that it was in progress. The following year we took in twenty-four freshman and of that twenty-four we graduated sixteen. We are looking to graduate between thirty-five and forty this spring. The program has been very popular principally because of the prospects of jobs in the industry. We were graduating people and their average starting salary is in the order of $17,000. The first year that I was here I taught all the testing courses, and I had one student who was graduating from the program that year working in a part-time capacity helping me. This year we hired another gentleman and he now shares the lecturing responsibilities with me. We are looking to put on another one next year. We just find that we can't get the job done the way that we would like it, can't coordinate it as well as we would like to by using part-time staff. It is very difficult to maintain an interface with them.

My experience at the university, when I taught there, you never had more than two preparations. That's not the case in the community college. And I really believe that you don't get as much out of the faculty because in truth they are overworked. We have as many as eighteen hours contact. I really believe to do a good thorough conscientious job, especially in rapidly changing areas such as materials technology, that is too much of a load. I don't find that I've got the energy that I would like to spend on developing curriculum . If you teach mathematics, calculus, it hasn't changed much, especially mathematics at the level that we teach it here. I find it a real hardship in trying to do all that I want to do with an expanding program. These courses were never taught in college for college credit until three years ago, anywhere around here.

I find that eighteen hours is an awful lot of contact when you are trying to develop the courses, expand the program, and do the teaching as well. I try to create interest and in a program like this it is very beneficial to have worked in industry. I maintain a lot of class interest because of the experiences that I have had. I've had a mix of college-level teaching experience and consulting, and a lot of industrial experience in areas that are exciting to the students, such as nuclear power plants, and heavy electrical generating equipment, aerospace reentry material.

We take attendance , a state requirement, so initially that is what happens in the classroom. I start by recapping what it was that we talked about the day before and indicate the new work that we are going to embark on. I am writing a textbook, I know it intimately, and I don't use any notes. I am trying to get these students aware of where equations come from rather than learning equations just for the sake of learning them, so we go through a lot of derivations. That is difficult sometimes to do at their level. We are beefing up the math requirement in the program so that they can understand a little bit better the origin of some of these expressions that are very necessary for them to work with. I don't like to take attendance. It is something that bugs me. The first year that I was here there were only nine people in the class. After a couple of weeks I got to know them all very well and now we have classes where there are as many as thirty people in them. There are people here with financial assistance programs, requirements in the state of New York. People who are on these kinds of programs, you have to take attendance. The GI bill--they require attendance so we do it. It is a school requirement and I go through that motion.

I try to be very formal in some parts of the lecture because I find from my past experience here that if you just try to be a regular joe, they kind of seem to take advantage of that situation; so you have got to maintain the proper classroom interface, instructor-student interface. I've tried it other ways and it doesn't work. The students are pretty young, they are fresh out of high school, and they were not good students in high school. They are the kinds of students that have been underachievers, and so you don't crack as many jokes as you would like to. The school has an open admission program. We have tightened up the requirements in the testing program by saying that you must have two and one-half years of high school mathematics to get into the program, you must have two laboratory sciences to get into the program, one of which should be either chemistry or physics. Testing is nothing more than applied physics, and people coming here with no physics background or chemistry background we find just can't handle it at the level that we think it should be taught. Once the program got popular it was easy to crank up the requirements and the hope always was of getting a slightly better quality student. I'm not sure that that has happened. It seems to me in the three years that I have been here , the age of the student has gotten younger.

I concretely observe that the students are here because there are no jobs available in the area. They don't want to go into the service; they figure they might just as well go to school as do nothing. I see very very few students with a genuine interest in the program. That improves between the first and the second year. As you might suspect, the attrition is pretty heavy between the first and second year. They just don't come back. We take in sixty freshman, we look to graduate thirty-five to forty. It is troublesome. I will have to admit, having taught sophomore and junior level courses by the time they were sophomores and juniors most of the attrition had already taken place. Having taught at that level and then coming to this community college, I find that I have to look for different things to challenge me in the course development and in writing this textbook. The students--they just can't seem to comprehend at the same level that students would be able to comprehend for the same age in the same year at a local private college, for example. They are just not that kind of student. And that is a little frustrating. I would like to teach much of the program on a little higher level. I think that the first two years of college credit really deserves that. This is not a vocational school, they are taking courses here that potentially could transfer to other state schools and get a four-year degree.

The service that I am trying to perform for them is one of getting them ready to go out and work in industry and I know what's there in that industry, because I spent a lot of time in it. And I know what a good technician or a good specialist should be able to handle. And we are not even keeping pace with the technology, it is changing faster than I can almost read about it. So when you talk about the principles and fundamentals, you have to cover those and get right into some very meaty stuff as soon as you can if you want your students to be competitive . This is a terminal program. We are not trying to make engineers out of these people. In industry you train people to turn out an instrument, twist a bunch of knobs and look for certain specific things and they get good at doing that, they really don't understand what it is they are doing. In a program such as we are trying to run here, we want them to be able to do that when they get out into industry, but we want them to understand the basic laws of physics that apply and that is the difference.

You can't talk about anything in physics without very heavy orientation in mathematics, it is impossible. We try to build on very basic physics principles and develop from that point of view. For example, I ask very often early in my classes in radiography and in ultrasonics what we mean by frequency. The students coming here don't have a feel for what frequency is all about. Here if somebody doesn't know what a logarithm is, you take the class-time to tell them, but at the technical college you didn't have the time for that. If you were teaching in a math program there and you had four hundred sophomores taking sophomore mathematics, you had no choice but to keep pace with the outline; everybody had the same homework assignments, everybody took common mid-term examinations, common finals, your troops had to be up with everybody else. But in this program if the students can't handle it, we go back and we pick it up again. I guess the other part is, if I were teaching a course in ultrasonics in a university, I would just keep pressing along with the theory and try to show how that theory had practical implications. But here we do more than that. We talk about the actual inspection of steel and the theory involved in that. There is a lot more detail that we go into as regards the calibrations that you wouldn't bother to mess around with engineers. Here you give that extra detail.

I am adjusting to it, I like it. It is very rewarding at the end of the year to have your students get a good job, then go out in industry and hear back from their employers that they are really doing well. And I think that is worth something. The level of mathematical or scientific approach in these courses doesn't really challenge me that much. I think I look more to a challenge here from what we are doing for these people in terms of preparing them to go out and work competitively in the field and do a good job. I am certain that my students with two years of experience out there will be way out in front of other people who had maybe equivalent industrial training courses with the same kind of experience. I think my students can go further.

One of the things that I like about teaching is the opportunity to learn; and I guess I am a person, whether in teaching or whatever I have done, I have always had an intensity to want to learn things. My wife tells me, many times, "Why do you keep changing textbooks? You had those notes all generated last year, you had the problems all worked out, you could have used the same textbook over again." Well, I wouldn't learn anything by doing that. I have enough going to keep my interest at a high level.

I am writing this textbook. I am including things in this text that are certainly optional sections for my students. I bought the only available textbook that one could think about using . It is a book written in Germany. And it is not a textbook, it is a good reference book. There is no structured sequence in it that allows you to teach from it so that the students get the proper background. I found it more difficult trying to teach from this book because I was kind of tying myself to structuring lectures around it and it didn't have the continuity that I really required for myself to be able to present good lectures. I needed to build on things and it just wasn't available. And so the only other thing available was this home-study type of training material that comes out of the industry. So one of the reasons that I am writing a textbook in testing technology is because none exists. These training manuals that they have had in industry were typically home-study kinds of things. And they just aren't in-depth enough for college credit. So it's been a real challenge and a lot of work.

I have written at night. I work probably twelve hours a day. It is the only time that I get to write. I work on it weekends. I wrote some of it some last summer between consulting. My consulting activities pick up more heavily in the summertime. It has been a very unique experience for me. I got a whole batch of physics books and I began to study the portions of those books that I thought I would need and began to develop some notes in building my own thinking. And what I tried to do was give the students a little background to simple harmonic motion as a place to start. What do we mean by a transducer when it vibrates. Then I sat down and tried to put together what I thought would be good background for them. And I did it with models which don't require the use of calculus. I think there is a big market for it, too.

I write drafts of it, sometimes I write it and I rewrite it and I put figures in and then I change the figures and when I get that finished I am never satisfied with it, and I give it to my wife and she types it. I am not satisfied with it then; but I have to have something, and if I waited until I got satisfied with it, I would never give the students anything. Right now, I am writing it and using it faster really than I can get it written. The first semester is all principles and fundamentals; the second semester is how we can apply those principles and fundamentals to real testing situations. I came to realize that I can't get this thing done as fast as I need it. I have written probably five chapters out of, what I would guess, maybe twelve. My interests are as much in materials as they are in testing because to me if you know anything about testing you really can't separate yourself from materials because that is what you work on all the time. And you will never be any good at testing unless you understand the materials systems.

About my consulting work, I made sure that it was there before I came here and they had recognized that as a part of my being here. I think it is important for people who work in technologies to maintain a currency with a technology and there is no way to do that if you sit in an office in a school. You know, it's one thing to read about new developments and it is another thing to be a part of them. It is like a second job except that it doesn't involve that much of my time. I work probably, typically a couple of days a month down there and I would say a couple of days at home.

I am available for consultation with students in my office hours. I have a group of students who are having a lot of difficulty . I hold little classes for extra help and they can come if they want to. I have a higher regard for students with somewhat less ability who've got an attitude of willingness to work than I have for people that I know damn well have got a good background and could do the work but have a poor attitude and don't care. The side of the teaching that I enjoy is what I have described: the intensity that I really like in terms of putting the material together and struggling for new ways to present that particular kind of material that is not available right now, that I enjoy. Last year the students all took a collection in my classes and sent my wife and I to a resort for the whole weekend, which I thought was kind of nice. I think that the students appreciate the extra effort that I do to help them find jobs.

I spend a lot of my time making sure that the career placement office has the right people lined up and can find work for them. You know I try to convince people around here that this school is a business really, and you have got a product and it is students and our success in this program and in all the other programs is going to depend to a large extent on how well we can market these students. If they can't leave here and get gainful employment, if we can't do that part of it well, then we haven't completed the whole program. I think a large part of our commitment to these students is to help them find a job afterwards. I think we need a little more exposure, not just for the testing people, but for our electrical technicians people as well. I am certain that if I can get these people out to conferences where they spend a minimal amount of money, that we can get a lot of exposure and I'm certain also that there are alot of jobs out there that we don't know about .

I am doing something that I enjoy. Many teachers are here, for example, from prior high school teaching experience. They are dedicated-teacher types, that is their life. I'm a different kind of person. I am told that I am going to be offered a job at a company which is going to be at a salary that I'm not going to be able to turn down. I'm going to turn it down because it isn't stimulating enough. I'm going to do this crazy thing that I'm doing. Crazy from the point of view of the hours that I work. I probably work sixty hours a week as a fair estimate. I don't think that work hurts anybody. I find my own

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rewards.

There is nothing that I would rather be doing than what I am doing right now. Obviously the notion of working at a four-year school is certainly something to consider, but I feel an obligation to the troops at this community college and being very concerned about the size of our class and their being able to get jobs, all of these things present a challenge to me which I find very interesting. I enjoy it. I get a little discouraged sometimes. I have been teaching a course in materials; we use a book that they use at the sophomore level in the materials department of a nearby four-year school. The students tried to read it and got discouraged and, as a consequence, they just gave up reading it entirely. And I tried to make a very comprehensive final exam, I tried to have it touch on the highlights of everything. And they didn't do well with it. I tried hard and I just don't think that it was all that effective. I think a simpler book might have been more to their advantage than to try to work with this one.

Maybe this is a wrong impression, I just get the notion that among sorts of students that we get at the community college they are the kind of individuals who if they can read it and maybe struggle a little bit with it, "Okay, we will give it a shot," but if they try to read it and it seems on the surface to be overwhelming to them, I think they just give up. Characteristically , the good students don't come to a community college. These people graduate from high school and get some notion that now maybe I better do something by way of preparation and they get some notion that if they come here and put in their time and get this diploma that automatically with it is going to come this great and glorious job that they read about in the paper. And we try to tell them otherwise, but it doesn't always work. I try to tell them the first days of orientation that testing requires a lot of integrity on the part of the individual. I try to use approaches like, "we cut the program off at sixty, if you are not willing to devote the time and energy that we feel is necessary to get you trained to the level of competence that industry demands, then step aside, because we have turned away a lot of people." You think, why is this person spending his time here, and you can tell by his performance he just isn't doing anything. What can you do to try and motivate this individual?

I think in terms of how to make this course interesting, trying to tie it to the kinds of things that I know they will do in industry, and giving a lot of very specific examples. Sometimes I think that the student has the attitude of, what the hell , we don't need this. And so I take a procedure that is used for the inspection of stainless steel walls in a nuclear power plant and we go through that procedure and I show them exactly where what we have been talking about in class fits into this situation. We are not going through this in just some mental exercise, you know, like when you were a sophomore in high school you studied English because you have got to study English. That's not the case here. If you don't want to do this, then maybe you'd better look for something else because you have to learn this if you want to work in this field . This is the bare minimum that we are talking about.

Rather than think about levels of intelligence, I try to think in terms of a student as being a good student, a poor student, a better student, because this is not necessarily a characteristic of their innate intelligence, it's more what their attitude might be. I don't think people should be separated on the basis of intelligence. I think they should be separated , if there is going to be any, on the basis of attitude and willingness to work and performance. They are either good students or they are poor students, and that is not really a function so much of their abilities as it is their attitude. Anybody who is accepted into the program, if they want to, can do the work. I had a student the first year, he was the most diligent student that we had, he never missed a class, he stayed right to the last minute in every lab, then came around and just bothered the hell out of me for extra help because he was not understanding things. Well I worked harder probably trying to find him a job because I knew that this fellow would work great in a team situation where there was a supervisor in charge, maybe of a radiographic facility, and he was going to be one of a team of three or four. And he was going to learn it from the ground up and he was going to do a good job in that kind of capacity. I think that is the role that a community college should play anyway.

My son the other day said, "You know, you think about a community college in terms of a learning experience as compared to a thinking experience." If you dwell on that, you get the notion that in better four-year schools people are trying to teach them to think. Whereas I think historically, in this state at least, in community colleges the emphasis has been strictly on learning; you learn this so that you you can go out and work at this and make a living. And not enough emphasis on thinking, you know. There is a subtle difference between the two, and I think about hopefully incorporating some of both in this program even though it is a terminal two-year program after which people are supposed to go to work in industry. I want them to learn how to think.

People have to want to be there. They have to want to learn. If they want to learn they will do some thinking in that process and I think that is it. That is the way that I judge people in classes, look at what I think is their attitude about how much they want to learn. If they show me that they really want to learn I will work very hard for them, I get students who come to work, come to class, drunk and that kind of thing. You just can't have that kind of individual out working on a safety system in a nuclear power plant.

I know that there is a lot of work out there. There are jobs everywhere, I know that is the case. The only problem is getting those people who need my students aware of the fact that we have got this program. The college needed a showcase program. Student enrollment was down. They wanted a showcase program, they wanted a lot of publicity. Now you have got it, you have talked all these students into coming here, what are you going to do? I feel caught; I feel I created this monster, I've got to try and find these people a job. I go down and talk to the people in career placement, they don't know how to do this thing. They don't know how to market this program. The school needs a brochure, we've got to get this thing out to the public, the industry, they have to know about the program. I know they have needs. And sometimes I get upset because I have to do that too.

I think I am more intellectually inclined than I am pragmatically inclined. On the other hand, the things that I enjoy doing as a hobby are very pragmatic kinds of things. I have never really thought about me in terms of being an intellectual. I really get very excited about learning things and studying. So much sometimes to the point where I get preoccupied with it and I let other things that I also enjoy kind of slide. I enjoy it, but it is intense, and I need to take periods of time to go to my hunting camp and look at a rock. The kinds of thinking that I like to do, the intensity with which I like to pursue the subject that I am interested in, are beyond the scope of what they consider our role to be at the community college. I like to be able to help people learn to think. The methodology of approaching problems, the analyses that you use, how you get started are more important than the mechanics of being able to solve the equations. I would like my students to be able to think, at whatever level they are able to handle it. I don't see that side of me being satisfied in a lot of depth at the school. Which is perhaps why I am pushing myself in the direction of writing the book. Maybe I need that book to satisfy that aspect of my personality. I think my interest in the school is that I really have enjoyed developing the program. I have more fun developing it than the day-to-day teaching in it. Some of the courses are very mundane and, thankfully, I don't have to teach them.

It doesn't appear now that I will ever have an opportunity to finish that master's degree. I am pretty busy. Too busy to even entertain any thoughts about graduate school at this point. And I am fifty-two. You know, my wife told me the other day that my daughter is going to be thirty. When I passed forty it didn't bother me, when I passed fifty it didn't bother me, but when she told me that my daughter was going to be thirty, I felt old. That's the only time that I've ever even stopped to reflect on it. Somebody asked me how long I have been married and I said I can't ever remember not being married. Thirty-one years is a long time.

You know in industry I think more people spend more time worrying about, let's see where is my next step, where am I going next, rather than the day-to-day job . They seem preoccupied with, they are always looking for, praise and satisfaction. Now I don't want praise and satisfaction; I'll find my own satisfaction from the things that I do, and I don't need praise and promotions and that sort of thing to make me happy. The next step for me is to finish writing this book which I find a lot of satisfaction in.

Commentary

Edward Thompson has a "semi- photographic" memory which he says "really helps." He grew up in a suburban area working in his father's gasoline station from the time he was ten years old. By the time he was in high school, he knew more about automobile and motorcycle engines than any of his shop teachers. He was bored with school and was anything but what we would call today "a preppie." He saw himself becoming a skilled tradesman, either a plumber or electrician. He knew the importance of money and he figured that those occupations would be his way to make a good living. A motorcycle accident which caused permanent injury to his back led him to reconsider. He entered a community college and came to realize that graduates of community colleges did not get paid very much. His realistic perspective and his mother's urgings combined to lead him to thinking of a teaching career and to enrollment in a four-year college.

He loved college. He never got less than a B in anything. He savored the independence he had living away from home in a small college town. He combined industrial technology, biology and education certification. He graduated, came back home and drove a truck until he found a job teaching handicapped students in his local school district. He started on a master's program at the nearby state university, did his work in the schools in the morning, held a job in the afternoon, and attended graduate classes at night. On the recommendation of a fellow graduate student, he interviewed for a position in a soon-to-open community college. He passed the intense interviewing process with flying colors and landed the position. He proved his worth to the college immediately by saving them $148,000 in construction costs as he oversaw the completion of the new campus.

In this precis of Thompson's path to the community college, two aspects stand out: his enormous reservoir of intelligence and energy and his assumption of a stance that separates intelligence and intellect (Hofstadter 1963, pp. 24-51). He displays a "resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it, and a disposition constantly to minimize the value of that life" (Hofstadter 1962, p. 7). At the same time he resents the stigma attached to the notion of vocational education.

In fact, he shares with his colleagues in the liberal arts a concern that his students know math and be able to read and write. He is bothered by the stereotype of the dumb mechanic; he knows that this is a contradiction in terms. He is bothered by the fact that the students he gets are those who think that they can do nothing else. When he tests them he makes them write. If they cannot read and write, he sends them to the college tutoring program. If they cannot improve their literacy skills he pulls them aside for counseling and confronts them with what he thinks are the facts of the situation.

His major concern in all of this is that his students get jobs. He knows that the students that come to him either have not been able to land a job or to keep a job. He sees his work as giving them the skills to hold a job. That many of his students drop out of his program well before they finish the two-year course does not upset him, if they drop out because they have secured a job.

Thompson has little patience for his academic colleagues. He sees his task as preparing his students for what is, not for what ought to be. He understands the hierarchical occupational structure, realizes that everyone cannot be a professional, and values the contribution that a good mechanic and service man makes to society. He knows the importance of money and he has little patience for abstractions that do not recognize that reality .

In his separation of intelligence from intellecthe would countenance no suggestion that his intelligence is unequal to anyone else's. He has an unerring sense of the basic parity among a wide range of jobs despite the lack of parity in status and remuneration. Because of a conflict in our interviewing schedule, our interview with him was unduly compressed. As a result we did not have the space to explore further with him some of the gray areas that might lie behind the dichotomies he presents. We know enough to know that his separation of the world into two camps (those who can do and those who cannot) provides us with only an introduction to his thinking and to the complex sensitivities and understandings that lie behind his divided world view. At the same time, we have no doubt that he lived with and acted out these dichotomies in his work in the community college.

Scott Muller, teaching across the country in New York State, does not accept the dichotomies that Thompson asserts. He always wanted to be a teacher and to explain things to people. His sense of adequate explanations includes not only how things work but why they work that way and how the context affects the way things work. Like Thompson, he understands the intelligence required to handle mechanical matters such as the way engines work, and knows that the students other teachers consider to be "dummies" are far from that. Muller understands, from his own experience in school and in growing up, the effect of being tracked and being told by parents not to aspire too high. He carries out, in his day-to-day work, an understanding of how vocational education is related to the social class system in this country. While not preaching a revolutionary consciousness, he wants his students to understand where they are in the occupations they have chosen to pursue. He wants them to understand the relationship of the job they are preparing for to a career in the field. He knows that skills (at least as the word is currently understood) are not enough. He wants his students to have a sense of themselves and the context in which they are operating.

What Muller wants for his students is the same thing that many of the faculty in the liberal arts say are important for students. Muller sees no dichotomy between the type of understanding promoted in the liberal arts and the type of understanding he is trying to promote. He has a holistic view of technical tasks. He views troubleshooting machinery to be an act of pure intelligence in which a sense of the whole system and its context is necessary. The relationship between the service man and the piece of equipment is one in which thought bridges the separation between the service man and the object of his attention.

Muller knows the intelligence required to troubleshoot a system. He understands the necessity of keeping in mind a set of interdependent relationships, as service men sense where they have been and where they are going. Muller has the personal knowledge that the abilities needed to be a good service man are not different from the abilities needed to be an engineer. Like Thompson, Muller knows that people are far more similar in intelligence than they are different. He has an intuitive sense of the notion of ability versus performance, and knows that if his students are not performing well, it is not because of wide differences in ability but more likely because performance has been affected by their experience at home and in school. He understands the apathy and anger of his students whose intelligence has been taken out of their control and who hope for a way to regain control by matching a sense of their inner selves with the type of work they want to do. Even as understanding a teacher as Muller seems to them part of a system over whch they have no control. Muller admires the diligence of his one Black student who struggles with the attitude that he cannot learn very much no matter how hard he tries. Despite all the progress he has made, this student still feels that he does not know anything.

Muller works hard to try to make his students feel that they have options. He works to see to it that his vocational program is a first step in his students' sense of what is possible and not the last step. He has an abundant sensitivity for their hurts. He knows their sense of having been excluded and having been labeled and he pours enormous energy into developing a rich program for his students. He knows his field of heat transfer, stays active in it, and conveys to his students his wide range of experience. He has a sense of quality that transcends dichotomies between the type of teaching, learning, and understanding required in the liberal arts and in vocational education. He lends integrity to the notion of career education by the way he transcends those easy divisions. Finally, despite his heavy involvement in the college, he feels somewhat isolated because his sense of quality and his aesthetic vision of technology is difficult to communicate; it is perhaps most shared with colleagues whom the structure of his community college most separates him from, those in the liberal arts. He sees his students as whole people. He sees the jobs they are preparing for as part of a broader system. He sees the relationship between material and intellectual concerns. Like his colleagues in the liberal arts, he wants his students to do more than just learn skills by rote; he knows the self-denigrating implications of that type of learning. He works as hard as any of his colleagues, from his position as a faculty member in the air conditioning program, to teach students to think deeply. Through his actions he attempts to bridge the same gulf between training and education that so concerns many of the faculty in the liberal arts .

Like Muller, Leonard Braddock's work in the community college embraces no divisions between skills and understanding. Teaching in a highly sophisticated area of materials testing, there is no question in his mind of the difference between what he tries to provide in his program and the comparable training available in the industry itself. His students must learn more than how to turn knobs and read meters. His students must understand the principles that undergird the field and that means understanding physics and mathematics.

He sees his vocational program as collegiate. He sees the courses he teaches as potentially transferable to four-year colleges. He does not accept the notion that career programs in community colleges are necessarily "terminal." He thinks of his program as having a national identity even though it was developed in response to a local industry's needs.

A major concern about his students is that few of them enter his program with a real interest in it and the fields of study which provide its foundation. Instead they are attracted to it because of the publicity which the college has given his program in an attempt to revamp the college's local image. Many of the students who enter are attracted by the high salaries successful graduates of the program seem to be able to command; yet they have little background in physics and math that is required to be successful in the field.

Braddock does not shy away from the issues involved in teaching students with insufficient backgrounds in the key academic areas of his field. He does not want them to memorize equations that will solve technical problems; he wants his students to understand the origin of the equations. He does not divide students by intelligence. He sees the real underlying divisions as those of attitude. And he is willing to work with any students with the right attitude toward learning to bring up their performance.

He does get discouraged with his students at times. He wants his courses to maintain a high standard. He sees his courses as the first two years of college, and, like the nursing faculty in the preceding chapter, he knows that the industry demands a standard of skill and understanding which is mandatory for the safety of the industry. He grapples with the very same concern that Ed Thompson tries to grapple with in California: some of his students cannot study the material because they cannot read well enough to deal with the language in the reading material. At this point, he only has to recognize the issue, since he gets far more applicants for his program than there are available spaces and those that cannot read adequately will drop out.

At the same time that he approches his program as though it were a collegiate-level effort, he also recognizes the need to market his students. He combines a sense of the business world and the educational world and urges his college to take steps to insure that his students can travel to conventions, have interviews with prospective employers, as any first-rate institution interested in the reputation of its product would do.

When he came to the college he negotiated his contract in such a way that he was free to do major consulting during the year. His consulting adds to his income, to his staying abreast in his field, and to his stature with his students. His community college, in this individual case, structured Braddock's working conditions with some of the freedom he would have if he were teaching in a four-year college or university. His own intellectual work makes him particularly susceptable to his son's questioning the community college's emphasis on learning versus thinking. In everything that he tries to do in his teaching and writing he wants to get his students to be able to think well and critically about the field. His sense of his work is that it is not just preparing students for a job, it is preparing them for a career in a field; to have a career in a field they have to be able to think in the language of that field. He knows that understanding a definition requires understanding a range of relationships. Braddock has goals that are similar to those of his colleagues in the arts and sciences and he shares similar concerns in reaching them.

Consulting, teaching, commitment to his field, and a pedagogy that stresses understanding integrated with technical training, all come together in the time and energy he devotes to writing a textbook that will facilitate his notion of what learning should be in his area. He writes in the evening, on weekends, in the summer; he thinks about his book when he is making the five-hour drive to his consulting job. When he gets to the motel the evening before he is to appear at the plant, he often writes.

He reviews the literature, synthesizes the context, identifies the principles, garners the technical information, clarifies the methodologies in a concerted attempt to make his highly sophisticated field accessible to his students. Through his writing he bridges the gap between the academic underpinning of his work and the realities of the industry and his students' performance level. When he thinks of his work in industry and the type of insecurity that came with ambition tied to external rewards, and he takes stock of the intrinsic pleasure he gets from his writing, he has no qualms about who or where he is. In his own individual intellectual efforts he bridges the artificial fragmentation of theory and practice, education and training, college and industry, intellectual and manual labor.

In his article on vocational education in community colleges, Fred Pincus urges that community college educators work with working-class and minority students to provide them "with a historical and political context from which to understand the dismal choices they face" (Pincus 1980, p. 356). In fact, Scott Muller teaches in a way that is remarkably consistent with Pincus's urging. But the aspect of Muller's approach to his work (and to a lesser extent that of Thompson and Braddock) that may be even more radical than Pincus is their recognition that mechanical and technical skills cannot be isolated from a larger sense of understanding in the true sense of the word "skill." They know from first-hand experience that students who work with mechanical objects, who are, so to speak, "good with their hands," cannot be so without being good with their heads also. They know that, despite all the advocates of Taylorism, training the hand cannot be separated from educating the mind. They each respond to this knowledge in different ways: Thompson with some anger, Muller with an approach to teaching that consciously tries to bridge those gaps, and Braddock with teaching and writing that attempt to share his understanding of that basic fusion of mind and hand. Muller and Braddock, like their colleagues in the arts and sciences, strive for a more complete conception of career education. Their individual efforts as faculty are toward a sense of education consistent with the goals of some of their colleagues in the liberal arts. Yet the larger forces at work in American society and community college education draw them farther and farther apart.

Section Four:

Varied Perspectives

Section Four: Varied Perspectives

Preface

Section Four of this report presents chapters which cut across the dichotomies highlighted in Sections Two and Three. Chapter Ten presents the experience of three counselors whose work and perspective on that work is influenced by their place and function in the community college organizational hierarchy. Chapter Eleven presents the experience of three faculty who, as members of a minority in predominantly white institutions, are "a few among the many." This aspect of their working conditions is explored in their profiles and the commentary that follows. Chapter Twelve presents the experience of three faculty for whom work in the community college is a second career. Their earlier work experience allows them to see the community college from a perspective enhanced by their former work experience. In Chapter Thirteen we follow up on a subject that is referred to in many of the faculty profiles: the experience of nontraditional, returning women students. These profiles of students create a mirror through which to view the experience of community college faculty. In addition they provide concrete details of the experience of these highly-regarded community college students.

Chapter Ten

Finding a Place on the Totem-Pole: The Work of Counselors

Introduction to the Profiles

We move from exploring the work of community college faculty to focus on the work of counselors. As one of our participants said, faculty, to a greater or lesser degree, have a vocational field or academic discipline to which they owe some allegiance. It infuses their sense of identity and affects their everyday relationships with colleagues, students, and administrators. Counselors, on the other hand, have a relationship with the students unmediated by a field of study. Their work provides a perspective on community college education different from that of faculty. The profiles of Julia Alvarez and Richard Soleti who, at the time we interviewed them, were counselors in a suburban Massachusetts community college, and of Deborah Proctor in New York State, reflect issues of status, power, and opportunity that seem to be endemic to the work of a counselor in community colleges, no matter what the geographical area or particular nature of the college. How those issues are worked out in these profiles deepened our understanding of key organizational and social tensions that operate in community colleges.

Profile

JULIA ALVAREZ

(Julia Alvarez is a counselor in her thirties working at a suburban community college in Massachusetts. She was interviewed at her college in the spring of 1980.)

My parents were missionaries and they travelled to different parts of the world. I was born in Tangiers, Morrocco. Then we lived in the United States for a few years and then we moved down to San Jose, Costa Rica in Central America where my family has resided since 1960. My father is Cuban and my mother is from the United States. The language spoken was Spanish for my first three years. Then we moved to the States. So from ages three to nine I learned English and then from nine on it was all Spanish. I still spoke English with members of my family.

I went to a high school where there was a lot of counseling and advising available for students and where faculty members took individual interest in students. At the same time I developed an interest in music and played the piano and did a lot of work in that in high school. So when I entered college and this was at Miami-Dade Community College(at that time my family was living in Miami) I chose to major in music education and was terribly disappointed to find out how competitive that field was. That was a big blow to my ego. I decided to pick the other area in which I had been interested, social work; my family moved back to Costa Rica at that point and I started at the University of Costa Rica with a double major --music and social work. I completed about three years within that program,got married, and, due to my husband's work, came to the United States.

New York City is very vivid in my memories. We lived in Brooklyn. I don't remember too much except just city living, having a good time, playing on the sidewalks a lot. I was very aware of the dangers, but always a risk-taker. I was only five or six years old and my sister and I would take these long walks to the public library and carry home six books at a time. My father was a minister at the time and we lived in the minister's house next to the church and everything was concrete and a lot of crime. I remember once playing in our backyard, this guy threw a big door bolt from one of the top floors of the building--almost hit my brother who was a baby, and there were fires all the time all over the place. But I didn't grow up with any fear whatsoever.

Education was always stressed in my family. I was never told I had to go to college but I think one thing that influenced me tremendously in my life is the role model of my father on the positive side and of my mother almost on a negative side. My father was the achiever and he was always reading and he was always in school, even in later years. He began his college education at age twenty-six and he has always been in school, completing different kinds of degrees.

I felt clearly throughout my childhood that I was my father's preferred daughter. I got the love, the encouragement, and very high expectations communicated by a real look of disappointment if I failed to achieve less than perfect or if I failed to be the top person in the class. I always had to be the high achiever,even when I did secretarial work. As I was growing up it was always in my mind that was the natural thing that I would always do, almost like a calling, like God calling me to serve people. Even though I was good at math, chemistry, or whatever, I had no interest in those kinds of careers but always in careers where I would be directly helping people.

I always worked, as soon as I finished high school I started working. My first semester at Miami-Dade was working full-time, and traveling about an hour and a half each night to go to school four nights a week. So that was a real bad experience. Not that I felt uncomfortble about the college--it is beautiful and I had the feeling that I was in college, you know, and the youngest person there , I felt really lucky--but it was just very hard and I always felt at a disadvantage because my music training had been deficient. So it did give me a sense of not being good and I didn't want to do something in which I couldn't be the best.

Throughout my life I have always been an outsider wherever I have been. I am an American citizen. I don't feel that American, I don't feel like I belong in this state. I feel more attached to Costa Rica but when I am there I am an outsider because I am not a citizen. I really don't have an accent but for some reason because of how I look and some ways that I talk people know that I am not from there, that I wasn't born there. So this thing of identity is there and I have not fully resolved it in that I have a citizenship of one country but I identify more with another. My family is all there, and my husband is Costa Rican which makes me very close to the country.

I remember college years as being very difficult--a real struggle--both financial and just being tired all the time and not having much of a social life, always pushing myself so determined to achieve. I never felt like I was a real student. I would get away with the minimum requirements. I have always had the sense of judging the minimum that I can get away within class and still get my A, of course nothing less than an A, just being able to judge what it would take to get the A. A real rat race, you know, working all day and going to school at night, driving into the city, struggling to pay tuition and things like that, always feeling a sense of why there are so many people that can go to school full time and go to expensive schools. I think the rat race has always been a fact of life for me since high school. When I would go to high school all afternoon or till three and then go to the business school from then on and then I would do part-time work for my father. The rat race has to do with overachieving, of never being good enough for myself or my father. I got my kicks from being in a rat race and in a way feeling sorry for myself and feeling better than other people that took it easy, and feeling that I really drove myself hard. I had a lot of enjoyment and, in the meantime, I was intellectually stimulated many times, never in a very profound way though.

I was very skilled as a secretary and there are plenty of jobs in that. I looked and had several offers,one was at this community college, to be a secretary to the dean of students. Going evenings I completed my bachelor's degree in social work at the local state college. I entered a master's degree program in public administration and continued part-time evenings. I had known the director of counseling for years and had a good relationship with her and so I took my turn and she was able to observe my work. She liked the way I dealt with students and she knew, at that point, that I had completed my bachelor's degree and had started my master's. They had been reduced to almost no staff in the counseling center because of the cuts in the budget and it was coming to a point where they would have two openings and they wanted to fill those fast. Eventually the director of counseling approached me asking me if I had considered working in the counseling center. I had not, I never dreamt that I would get a position here at the college. So the positions opened and I applied, and being bilingual was a tremendous advantage because the college was starting to receive a number of Hispanic students. So I ended up getting that position. That was in 1976 and I have held that position since. Working here at the counseling center has opened my eyes tremendously to myself, to the world, to others. It was the turning point in my life.

What happened immediately after being hired was my confidence fell because I came to a situation that I was unprepared for. People were a lot more skilled than I was. For the first few months I felt that I was a failure. As the most senior member of the counseling staff now, other than the director of counseling, I do have a lot of overall office coordination responsibilities. I am in charge of the orientation program for incoming students, involved in general overall planning and basically working with the director and substituting for him when the need arises. In addition I have the normal counseling and teaching loads that all the counselors have. I teach two one-credit courses each semester. These are personal development courses lasting five weeks apiece. I also have a case load of individual student counselees and also I do a lot of walk-in quick question kind of counseling. For instance, people will be walking constantly in with questions about their academic program here, about transferring, about testing, about financial matters. In addition, we have other kinds of group activities such as the admissions counseling sessions for propective students. We have transfer workshops for people who consider transfering over to another institution and we have career workshops. I am, in addition, a member of the curriculum committee and I am a member of the sub-committee of the curriculum committee. To summarize, I would say that my job has a lot of variety. There is nothing boring about it. It is a challenge to have to change gears constantly. I feel that it is preparing me or training me extremely well to deal with any kind of high-pressure job.

Out of the fifteen-week semester I teach ten weeks. The difficulty is getting prep time. I have a love/hate relationship with teaching. I dread it but I love it. It is something that is not necessarily required of counselors. We got into the teaching field voluntarily. No one came down and said we had to teach. As a matter of fact we had to fight several battles in order for the academic sector to grant us the authority to teach. We fought for that from a philosophical basis of really feeling that this was a need and it was an effective counseling tool rather than to deal with every issue on a one-to-one basis. Our courses are fully credited and recognized throughout the college. We have about twelve different courses taught out of the counseling center. If I were asked, is there one part of the job that you would do away with if you had to, my first temptation would be to say the teaching. It is constantly on your mind and you are performing, you know you are on stage. But every semester it is a very rewarding experience. You really get to know twelve or fifteen students at once and it is very enjoyable to see how they interact with each other.

We do a wide variety of counseling that ranges from advising to therapy to personal counseling. A lot of the counseling is support counseling. Most of the counseling that I do is what I call personal counseling, more like therapy counseling but it is more growth-oriented, counseling within the student development model, meeting the person where they are and helping them go forward in their own developmental process. For instance, one area that I am especially interested in is their math anxiety. You get a lot of referrals on that topic. Also I work a lot with international students, helping them with adjustment problems that they may have, logistic problems, setting up their schedules. One of the things that affects the counseling is that there is a high turnover rate, a lot of students drop out or they graduate. I have never seen someone for two years straight. But I have seen people for an entire semester or as much as two semesters.

This morning a young woman was there and she wanted to tell me how well she had done on her math test. It is a math course she had tried twice and had flunked out and now she has tried again and she got a grade on her first test; it was a good grade so she was happy. Being available for them to come talk to you, they will usually become stronger and achieve the goals that they set a lot easier. A lot of those people don't get much encouragement at home and they are really down on themselves. They feel isolated. They feel bad about themselves and need some support, some encouragement to feel that they can do it. I do a lot of that. Usually they initiate the contact themselves; sometimes we get referrals from faculty members. So we try to build that referral system because the faculty members see the students all the time and they can usually spot a person that is having trouble.

Most of my counseling work is with people who are not necessarily troubled, even these people who are troubled are in college so they are at a high level of function in their life. I take my cases very seriously. I think about them during the week and I make notes and I try to read things that might help me with that person. It is a small enough caseload that it is not presenting a problem. I find it very challenging. It is a area that I want to keep learning and so I seek opportunities to do this kind of counseling.

I am not exactly sure how I started being interested in math anxiety, except for the fact that I enjoyed math and I have had good experiences with it throughout high schools and colleges and I was amazed to see the number of people that would come into my office and go on and on about how terrible a subject math was, how they hated it, how they couldn't do it. They were trying to get out of trying to take math and it just struck me it was such a pity that people went around feeling this way about math, which for me was such an enjoyable subject. I realized that the difference is not necessarily how well you do but your attitude toward math and started looking into why people develop a different attitude toward math. At that time a lot of literature and articles were starting to come out on the subject. So I started collecting things and talking to a math faculty member here at the college. I ran a couple of groups in the day and in the evening. We ran one group last summer for sixteen women and one man.

I always felt that I could achieve anything that I wanted to based on my personal qualifications and not related to the fact that I was a woman. But as I look around I have to face the realities of the system. For instance, as I look at the structure of the college, the president is male and until recently all of the four deans were male. If you look at other colleges, they have women in the position of dean of students which has always been the bottom of the totem pole. The next rung would be the directors and all of the directors are men. I will be excluded from positions at a high level because whoever is doing the hiring is picturing a man in that role and does not see a woman in that role or may have a man already picked out. They picture a man.

I think that being a counselor at this college is more detrimental to me than being a woman. Counselors are considered the work horses. They are really the lowest-level professionals that the college has, the ones that can be given all the extra work and the blame for things that go wrong. Counselors always in the past have always been associated with administration. We are held at high esteem by the administration because we solve problems. We answer questions. We make the administration's job a lot easier. The problems come with faculty more than anybody else because they see us as administrators. They have no idea of the confidentiality of the counseling relationship, the diversity of our jobs. A lot of them feel that we just sit in our offices all day and wait for students to walk in and that is all we do. When they see us on all these committees, they feel we are on these committees because we don't have anything better to do.

In some ways our perceptions are similar to faculty members. We identify with the faculty to a large extent. We see the students on a day to day basis, are aware of students' needs. But we don't have a discipline to protect. Faculty feel that they have to uphold the integrity of the discipline or ensure a certain kind of quality . We don't really have anything like that we need to protect. So we feel that we are able to be quite student-oriented. Many times it boils down to having information about students and advocating for students. Sitting on the curriculum committee or on the academic policies committee a lot of the decisions are very conservative. So I find that the counselors have always a very strong student voice on committees and more of a liberal orientation than most of the faculty.

Some days it seems that the whole job is useless, like you are spinning your wheels. Other days it seems like you are accomplishing a great deal. There are lots of times when I have a sense of personal satisfaction. Let's say someone that I have been counseling has had a good week and they have reached goals that they have set and feel really good about it. I feel a real sense of satisfaction that something is happening in my counseling. In the teaching the same thing: when I hear students talking about how they enjoy the class and how much they have learned and I see them participating actively--I get a real sense of satisfaction. From an administrative point of view I have had a lot of successes. Implemented new programs that have been successful, proposed different things that have affected the whole college, and have gotten those approved and that has given me a sense of satisfaction.

I see this position as a temporary one in my life. I don't see myself in this position five years from now. Hopefully I won't be at this position two years from now. This position is an entry-level position, a chance for me to develop as an individual. But it is a dead-end professionally. The next position would be director of counseling. I see myself moving into some area of management. I enjoy decision-making. I enjoy working with budgets and planning programs and implementing programs. I would not want to just be behind a desk all day doing paper work. I enjoy high-level responsibility. I enjoy independence. I enjoy hard work. Any position, if it is going to be done well, involves a certain amount of pressure in the sense of the responsibility and the accountability. Here I do not have really front line accountability. I am part of a team. I can make mistakes and learn from them without creating disasters. Lately it is a little more of a chore to come to work. I kind of think of the day and I realize there are going to be good things and not so good things and I am not that excited about coming to work. That is why I am starting to think that it is probably time for me to start thinking of new horizons.

In the first couple of years I felt on top of the world, being a counselor. That is not enough of a motivator for me anymore. I don't like being at the bottom of any totem pole. I don't necessarily have to be on the top anymore . But I don't feel comfortable being at the bottom. I don't think that it is the right place for me. Feels like you are always struggling to prove yourself, to prove what you are worth. For instance I don't feel comfortable standing in the outer part of my office because people walk by and get the impression that I am not doing anything. If they walk in Friday afternoon and there are three or four of us sitting around a table, they will drop a comment about the counselors sitting around talking to each other. So we are constantly having to be careful of our image. If I am going to talk to some other counselor, I usually go into one of the offices . We are very easy targets because we are involved in so many areas of the college, we are here for such a large number of hours, we are so visible, so accountable.

It seems that the lower you are, the more indispensable you become. I can identify with this, having been a secretary where you were really low. The pay, the status, everything. You were chained to that desk. There is very little recognition, very little incentive provided at that level and the counselor is only a little bit better than that in terms of the amount of flexibility in our positions. It is a very structured position in that it has the framework of the hours of nine to five and you have to be available for every moment of every day pretty much. And I was looking at salary figures; it turns out that we work thirty percent more days a year, and our salary is not even at one hundred percent of what the faculty's are. We are at ninety percent. Salary speaks also in terms of being at the bottom.

I feel that in terms of the eductional hierarchy, that the community colleges are considered the bottom. I resent that. I don't like to be associated with something on the bottom but most of the people who think of community colleges at the bottom are people who don't realize the uniqueness of the community college as an institution that crosses all sections of society. I started out at a community college and I certainly didn't consider myself a second-chance person or a person who would have never gone to college. There was never any doubt in my mind that I was going to college. I was at the top of my class. So in my perception the community college is something that is geographically convenient and inexpensive, which were important to me.

We had a breakfast two days ago to which we invited people from the high schools in the area. The main goal was to sell them on the idea of the community college where all their students can come, both the higher-level students and the student who never thought of going to college. We had some students who have graduated there to share a little bit of what the college has meant to them. The stories that we heard were just incredible. For instance one woman was on welfare and she reached the bottom and someone told her about the college. She came through our Special Services Program and went on and now she got a fellowship at an ivy league college.

I feel that I am performing a useful function. I am seeing people go from a very low self-esteem to achieving tremendous things for themselves. I have learned how to support my peers and how to go to them for support, how to generally use resources available rather than to think that I had to know it all. This was my first experience with a job where you have an area of your own responsibility without someone telling you what to do, though that was what I wanted all my life.

Secretarial work was always to me something to just support myself while I went to school. I never really felt like that was my profession. It is not that I hated it but I just felt that it was not what I wanted, for me as a lifetime thing. The salaries are extremely low. I felt like a slave, the thing that I disliked most about my job, I felt that I could not move; every time I went to lunch I felt guilty because it was a one-person office. I felt that I couldn't leave to take the courses, felt just really tied down to that job. That is the thing that I resented the most. That is a reality of secretaries.

Counselors have a lot more freedom. We can go to meetings.

We can teach classes. We have that flexibility, even though it is somewhat limited, in a lot of small ways. The first few years in this position I was really a strong defender of the rights of the secretaries. I have always questioned why it is not considered that a secretary is professional. I felt very much a professional in my job. I find that in many ways management is a continuation of that, a lot of the skills that a manager has are a higher level of skills that a secretary has. There are some people who choose to be secretaries. That is what their aspiration is career-wise. Other people become secretaries because they think that is all they can do. Then there are those people who do that as means to an end . I would put myself in that position. I found that the best secretaries are the ones in that first category, the ones who have chosen to be a secretary. I see a lot of people who are content with their status and don't feel that they have to change. It amazes me at times because I feel that after two or three years I get itchy and I need a change. I need something more challenging. Now I am going on four years here and I am very itchy.

You could say that I am a lot more ambitious than my husband is. I am more striving, and he is more in tune to finding a comfortable setting where he can really feel good and staying there for awhile. It is hard for him to understand my itchiness. Like right now, he doesn't understand why I am anxious to leave. Right now I don't find enough things that I am learning new, therefore I am not working as hard. It is not as much of a challenge. The next position I see myself going into will be a director of something or an assistant director or some kind of manager, so I know that there will be a lot of learning for me, that it would be a challenge. I know that I would have to work very hard. I fantasize at being content at every point in the career, but I don't ever see myself feeling that I have arrived, never saying, "On this is it," and settling back and just sitting here and relaxing for the rest of my life. There is always something more for me to learn, something new. I've really enjoyed being here, but I always have a sense that I would be moving on.

Even though this is a great deal more autonomy than I had as a secretary, there is less autonomy than I would like to have. So that would be one of the things that I would be looking for. Somehow I think there will be a point in my career where I will find that it is too much and that I don't want to go further. I think that will relate to pressure, because my personal life is becoming increasingly more important to me, my free time, my friends, my family. So I think at some point I can't have it all. At some point I will have to sacrifice something. As I see things now, I don't want to sacrifice my personal life. I don't want to get into a position where I am working sixty hours a week.

I find because of my career development I have certain very basic skills. Being the secretary gave me very good skills. Being a counselor gave me another set of excellent skills. I have had a lot of preparation, a lot of basic skill building, skills that are important in making things run well or in helping people. Also I feel that I have done a lot of learning about myself and that is one of the keys to being effective.

I think that a lot of this is based on my upbringing in which the content of directing my life came from Christianity and the values of Christianity. I have always identified with causes that seek justice. A lot of it boils down to justice. A lot of malfunctioning results in injustice, in unjust situations. Being influenced by the civil rights movement, political movements, and having been raised in Latin America, I was very much politically influenced: people being on the bottom through no wrong doing on their own but having been born in a certain place and a certain time and certain family, and other people being well off.

I find that working in the community college fits right into that because the community college is designed for those people who have not had a chance, who are in a certain social and economic status through no wrongdoing on their own. A lot of people that are on welfare or have not had access to higher education could go to college, could enter a profession or at least have the freedom to choose . These people grew up thinking that they have very limited choices, limited options. So it is kind of a social justice institution where you are really bringing people from a position of low self-concept, low economic status, to a higher position in the freeing of their minds and the opening of their options.

Maybe I am identifying with these people that are less privileged in the world coming from a family in which there were many children and was always struggling financially and the only way that you could go to college was if we financed our own.

I think that I have a direct influence especially on the counseling roles. I feel especially that this community college for the most part has a clear vision of its role or its mission of finding persons where they are and helping them along to achieve the goals they set for themselves, assist them in setting those goals. I feel very good about working in this particular community college. Most people at this college have that mission of serving and so that is one of the reasons that I enjoy working here. A lot of colleges, four-year colleges and universities, do not set out to do the same thing that the community college has set out to do, nor should they. I would have a hard time going to work for Harvard, I would have a very hard time relating to Harvard's mission.

There is a certain area that I didn't mention that exists and it bothers me and haunts me continually because of my background and because of what I know about justice and injustice. I feel that the society is very influential on its members, the American society, influential toward conformity. And I find that in spite of myself I have been influenced to conform. It is hard for me to be a true rebel in the system. So I have conformed a lot to the community colleges' stated philosophy. On the other hand there are these feelings that bother me a lot, such as the community colleges tend to perpetuate the system in which there is injustice. The community college doesn't really question the basic premises of the way that the society is set up. It is not a revolutionary force in the community at all, and it doesn't do that much to change the way things are basically. I don't know what could in this society. To tell you the truth, this is one of the most conservative societies in the world. It tends to swallow people up into its influence rather than to teach people how to critique and how to examine it. It is an issue that bothers me, but it bothered me more at the beginning than it does now. I realized that I conform more now.

It is easier to fit in. I question less. The most revolutionary that one gets in a system like this is pointing out when we are serving ourselves rather than serving the student but we don't affect society; structures continue to be the same. I find myself defending positions that in the past I have never defended. Here I find myself saying things that in the past would never come out of my mouth, feeling certain ways, feeling very comfortable with my position, feeling very much an individual, a lot of individualistic feelings. Not really caring about what happens to others, or what happens to the world. In the past I used to care a lot more and I was willing to sacrifice more of my own. When I felt that way I was more a teenager or early twenties. As you grow older you tend to become more conservative. So I can explain what has happened to me, but it bothers me that I have lost some of the vision of my past, the critical attitude toward my surroundings; and I feel it comes from almost feeling that you can't do much to change the system, it is not worth it.

Profile

RICHARD SOLETI

(Richard Soleti, in his early thirties, was a counselor in a suburban community college in Massachusetts. He was interviewed in his office in the spring of 1980.)

I came here as an intern from a graduate program at the state university. I had always had an interest in community colleges. I had selected as possibilities several community colleges and universities. It was the "mass interview" day--I said, why not try this college to see what they have to say. I had never been in this state. I spoke to the dean of students and the director of counseling. I had been one of the finalists for the university internship and I really wanted that, really bad, because it offered all kinds of experiences that I was looking for--plus that summer I was going to be married.

So all of a sudden I got a letter about coming to this community college--if I would be willing to come for a second interview. I came here just to see, and I liked it. I liked the staff, seeing the dean once again, seeing the director of counseling, and they were very excited about having me come here. We talked it over and we decided to make the total move to a new city. There were not real prospects for a job after the internship. I said, "Why not?" Our life up to that point had been kind of packing up and doing whatever we wanted to do. So we came and I started out as the intern here, and eventually was hired into a full-time position.

I always consider myself a city kid. I was born in New York and I was raised there for a good part of my childhood. We were part of the suburban flight. We moved out just before I entered high school to a suburban part of New York. We still had city roots--the rest of our family were still in the city. I think it was your basic working-class kind of family. I am really the first generation at college. Education was definitely something that my folks prized. They thought that it was very important but I don't think that they really understood the real meaning of it. It was just an idea. Naturally you would go on after high school, and after that they really didn't understand what it meant. I have two brothers and a sister. My brother is married and has a child, and my sister works at Macy's and I have another brother in high school--he is sixteen. I am the oldest. What I find myself doing with my younger brother is counseling. "What are you going to do with your life" kind of thing and I am kind of a pain to him. I have sent him catalogues, programs and colleges, and you know--"Hey, I am sixteen, I don't know what I want to do."

As a kid I wasn't an academically-oriented individual. I was just kind of plugging along doing as little as possible. That is how I remember school as a kid--doing reasonably well, the classic underachiever. "Could be an A student if he applied himself." I remember that so vividly--I think every elementary report card always said the same thing. I remember on the report card, "Respects the rights of others," I always had an N--needs improvement. My father would always say, "What does this mean?" and I would usually have S's (S meant satisfactory) in everything except "Respects the rights of others" and on the back she would put, "Talks in class too much."

My parents are immigrants. They are trades kinds of people. They look at school as training so they look at the early years as if this laid some kind of foundation for future training, whatever that might be. But as you got out of the elementary and into the junior high, now this had left their scope of education. I think they were very excited that now their children were in high school and were going to finish high school. "Hey, that is great, everything else is gravy now." Still very trades oriented, you know, what are you looking for? And I knew that I was not interested in a trade. I knew that I was not going to be an electrician or a plumber. I wanted to do something else. I remember saying I wanted to be a scientist, I wanted to be a doctor. So I knew that I would probably be going to college.

Junior high was a little tough because we had moved from the city to the suburbs. In the city school I was a good student but when I moved to the suburbs I was not a good student. Sixth and seventh grades--I can't believe how poorly I did. It was a whole new world. There were no busses, there was no transportation, and you know, my parents worked so they were not going to come home and say, "Now I will take you to Little League," so we missed out on a lot of things. That transition was a little difficult. You would have gym class outside on grass which was opposed to the school yard on asphalt. I used to have a lot more responsibility as a younger child because my mother could send me to the laundromat to take the cart with the laundry which was a few blocks away. But moving to the suburbs you couldn't do those things. You needed transportation to do everything.

Actually I went to parochial school for junior high--a city school to a suburban parochial school. My father probably heard while he was checking out the neighborhood about this particular Catholic school and knowing him I think they could always say, well, you sent your kids to a private school. Like I said, I did poorly in the beginning, but the last year, graduating from eighth grade, it was just an incredible turn-around. So I went into high school as an A student. I made a tremendous rebound from being this underachiever.

I read the paper every day from--I don't know--ten years old. That is probably from my father who reads the paper. School didn't interest me as much as it should have and sometimes I regret that. I was very sports-minded in junior high--acceptance by peers and the whole social thing.

Something that I discovered was social class. When I moved to the suburbs, there were all white kids. In the city we had always lived in an apartment, you know; some apartments were nicer than others but everybody lived in an apartment . We got there and we had a little ranch house. And then there was a group of people who lived in really nice houses near the water. You could see who was who--what kind of clothes people wore and what kinds of things they did. There was resentment from the old town people versus these new people moving into the neighborhood. I remember discovering the kind of caste system that we have in this country. It was tough to break into because I never knew that it existed. It was there and I just didn't see it. Sports was kind of an equalizer. It was based upon your ability.

I could hang around with the auto mechanic guys--the guys at twelve years old with hands you can tell have been working on cars for ten years already--but at the same time, associate with another group of people who belonged to tennis clubs. Occasionally I would get invited to play tennis with someone. You got to go to this club--"Hey, Mom, today I am going to the club." She said, "What for?" Most of my friends I guess were standard kinds of suburban kids.

My mother didn't drive. She used to take the bus to work. So when we moved to the suburbs she would have to drive. And I remember the stress, on Sundays taking my mother to a parking lot, all the kids in the back. She would have her permit and we would go up and down an empty parking lot, up and down, and just to make a little diversion we had this 8 mm. camera and we used to film the whole thing. We still have it and we crack up once in a while, you know, the jerky starts. To this day she really can't drive but she only has to go to the shopping center. It was so funny--my father yelling at my mother and she is yelling back. Those first years she used to walk. She is a machine operator, and she found a job in the town. She used to walk about two miles, and it was very interesting about the suburbs--if you see anyone walking, they stick out. People look out their windows saying, "Where is that person going?"

My father is a machinist. He has his own business. He grinds tools and scissors so he has this truck and the operation in the house. It is dawn till dusk kind of thing, hustle hustle hustle. He had his sixtieth birthday but he is still going strong. He loves it--the great lone independent worker. Having your own house you could have your much-expanded house shop, so business-wise it worked out pretty good for him. My father was born here. For some reason, maybe the start of the depression, they went back to Italy, everyone except my grandfather. Just my father came back to join my grandfather and the eldest brother. In 1939 my grandfather died and my father is nineteen years old and in California. Here is this guy, he doesn't know anybody. Now the war starts and my father was drafted. So he goes back to Brooklyn. He goes through this whole army thing, you know, going to Fort Dix, and they send him to California. So then he was in the Pacific theater. He had the idea, if I am going to be in service, send me to Europe and I can go make sure everything is okay, because he was Italian and had relatives in Italy. He was in the Pacific until 1946. Eventually at the end of the war he did go back to Italy and that is where he met my mother, in Italy, the same little town. They came here in 1948 and in 1949 I was born and the rest is history. My mother still has an accent and my father has a slight accent.

In the eighth grade people were actually talking about college. "The next year you will be choosing the college program as opposed to a vocational program." My God, there was a life decision and you really thought that the rest of your life was programmed. There were the people saying, I am going to the vocational program, you know, they had their mind made up. And the people who were obviously going to the academic program. I remember telling my parents, "What are we going to do here." It was I think lucky for me that they didn't have a vocational program, a real strong one, at the high school--not like the city where you went to the real technical school. It was mainly academic. I think that you got to take a couple of shop classes.

I remember the high school orientation. You walk all around and look at all the courses--God, look at all these courses-- and next year I will be taking chemistry and all this stuff and looking at labs, and gym, and hey Dad, can I go out for football? I remember economics. Our high school was pretty progressive. They had a one-half credit elective in economics, one-half credit in philosophy. I remember saying to my mother, "Philosophy, what is philosophy? Is it something like psychology?" I still remember that class. It was like the first time that I had sat in a circle in a class. This guy--he was probably brilliant, but I didn't understand a word that he was saying. We were talking about philosophical issues but we just used to sit in a circle and talk about things, and people would talk about themselves, and I would be looking around and I just couldn't believe it.

I remember I had a teacher in my freshman social studies and we learned all about Vietnam. I still remember it. My attitude was, by the time I get out of high school that will be over with, I won't have to worry about that. But as we get through high school the war is growing and by 1967 I am getting a little worried. People were joining the service, that was a very big option. They have the map of the United States, and then they have all the little pins, where they are. A lot of people from my high school went into service. I remember a kid I knew, he was a double amputee. He lost his legs and they named this VFW after him.

So now it is getting to be the senior year. It is 1966 and people are saying they are going to college, talking about it, and I didn't know what I was going to do. There I am plugging along at C+ level--sprinkle a few B's in there--and you know, "If only you would apply yourself." The guidance counselor will say, "Well, you know, those grades, you are not going to go anywhere and have you thought about joining the service, they have excellent programs." And I go, "Ho ho, oh no, I have not thought of it at all." And my father always saying, "I don't care where you go as long as you know what you want to do," and I was not sure what I wanted to do, and, "We will try to give you some support," and I knew that he couldn't give me much. I didn't want to say, "Here is a bill for $4,000." I never thought of a private school, never. And so it was the state college--what else. Not that that was a bad choice but, I mean, it was a decision that was based on faulty information. At the time it was all the information that I had.

The freshman year of college--you are meeting people from outside your community and again it was just like discovering high school after the parochial. Now you have people from different parts of the state--different towns and different perspectives. What I discovered about college was politics--politics of taking a position on something and really believing strongly in it. Demonstrations at first almost frightened me. I was not really sure what was going on. There was this whole drug culture--the hippie movement--and this was 1967 and I am fresh out of high school. People liked really demonstrating and chaining themselves together and I said, "My God, they are really into this." I could feel changes in me starting to happen. The change of how I viewed my parents, how I viewed growing up in the suburbs, this whole radical kind of change. My hair was getting longer and I grew a beard and all of those things. My mother would say, "Come on, you have got to go to church." And I would say, "No no," because I was out late on Saturday and no way was I going to get up on Sunday. I remember a history course, history of religion, and finding out about the Catholic church from the historical perspective and saying, "What have I been doing all these years?" It was a very confusing time.

I was concerned about this war that I didn't want to have anything to do with. I thought I was going to be a psychologist and I didn't want to get killed in a war. I didn't want to get involved in it. I knew that eventually I wanted to be a part of society and some kind of work. I knew that I didn't want to be an executive in business or something like that. I was confused as to what I was going to do.

My father wanted me to be an officer--go to college for a couple of years and join as an officer. A typical World War II kind of nostalgia, that is what I grew up with. When you are in college then you go to a Vietnam War workshop and they are talking about corruption of government. My rationale was I am not being unpatriotic, I think I am being patriotic. It is getting to the point where we are on the wrong side. There was this whole thing--discussions with my father, going home and values have changed, "How can you be this way? What are you talking about?" I was accused of being unpatriotic. I was trying to take the time to sort it all out.

I went to the placement center at the college and I went through some kind of career counseling. I said I want to do something, go to graduate school, so he told me about the counseling program at the state college designed specifically for college counseling. I did have some mental health background working in the hospital and I was a psych major so it is starting to follow that I want to get into counseling. It was a two-year master's program: the first year was an academic year and the second year was an internship year. My first few months here as a counselor intern I was volunteering for everything.

I think this is the best job in the college. It combines all of the parts of what is good about working in a college: teaching, which counselors at this college have an opportunity to do, and it is such a nice diversion from the other kinds of things that I do that I look forward to it. Another part of it is the counseling--counseling of any kind. Strictly academic advising, you can do that all day; if you would like to do the transfer kind of counseling, you can do that all day; if you would like to do career counseling, you can do that; if you want to do personal counseling or adjustment counseling--working with the individuals who are in transitions, adults coming back, they're in some type of change in their life. And in the third area, administrative work, which I find that I am getting to like a little bit more. I never thought that I would like it but I am starting to like it. Now I see students . You will answer questions about whether a course transfers to a state college and the next person is contemplating suicide. It is that kind of changing of gears. As an intern that is what I did a lot of. I went all out and I saw the most students, and I made myself available. I was available to cover the desk at lunch. That is generally the track as an intern, so you do get a real good exposure in counseling. You meet with your supervisor and you talk over cases and you sit in on staff meetings and faculty meetings. In May I would be joining the rank of the unemployed but they wanted to fill up the position quickly and you couldn't find somebody that quickly. So I interviewed with the two deans and it worked out.

Besides your general counseling duties you have an administrative area, and my area was transfer. What I did was to just look at that area, really look at transfer here. Who transfers and how does it work and really develop the idea of transfer. I had to do a lot of leg work, contacting colleges, building relationships, building up credibility for our college. Because transfer is really a relationship with another college and nothing to do with the quality of courses. In terms of actively meeting the four-year colleges and universities and inviting them here we would have conferences between departments; they would meet our faculty and we would meet their faculty. We had "transfer days." These organizations, thirty colleges, come here twice a year.

Now my area is academic advisement. We work through data processing, assigning faculty members as advisers. By the collective bargaining agreement every faculty member has to meet the student three times. We organize group meetings, select the rooms and hand-outs, notify the students when the meeting is so that takes coordinating, getting letters out. It is a massive task.

We are involved at new-student orientation. It is orientation/assessment. New students come in to college, they are assessed, for English, writing, mathematical skills. Second, they are given an orientation by the counselors. The assessment information is given right back to the students at orientation so not only do they learn about the college and how to select their courses but they receive information about themselves--that is built into the orientation system.

Another administrative thing that I do is that I am a member of the curriculum committee here. That is the committee that approves courses and programs offered by the college. And then we have staff metings. And I have about twelve students that I see on a regular basis. Those are students that I would say are involved in long term, psychotherapeutic kinds of counseling, transitional issues, or interpersonal issues rather than academic advising. Students can just come in and say that they would like to talk to a counselor. Our students would never dream of going for psychotherapy because they don't perceive that it is the kind of thing that they would need or want to have. They won't just come in and say, I need counseling, and begin to talk about their problems. Not generally. It is usually indirectly developed. We set up regular appointments and maybe say to an individual, "We are going to work on a specific kind of problem or a specific issue that you want to deal with, and let us talk about it." I like to be systematic.

I am the secretary to the union. That has taken a lot of my time. I really enjoy that part because there is a real battle to be fought and the battle is recognition of professional staff, counselors, librarians. These people are not recognized as part of the faculty, not part of the bargaining, and we are not administrators. Kind of in this limbo. And my battle is not only against the other members of the union but among ourselves--sometimes we don't even consider ourselves faculty.

I am working on a project right now. We are developing a conference for re-entering students, adult students. A one-day conference for adult students who want to come back to college. The format of the day will be a sampling. We will have a choice of fourteen different things and people can choose a forty-five minute sample of two or three things. It will be cafeteria style, like a college conference day. It is basically a recruitment effort. It is disguised as an altruistic function but you know we are trying to get students in here. I am looking forward to it because it is my first big project in terms of working with other offices.

I am coordinating advisement with the assistant dean of faculty. Any time that advising is a major decision I have to go back to the two deans to talk about it because what we're doing involves work load for people signing up students. It has all been worked out by formula. Any major decision that comes down I will check with the director of counseling only because I have learned that sometimes I don't have the whole picture so I can't just make a decision.

I don't have any power. My power rests in having a director of counseling and a dean who believe in me. As long as I check with them and they know what I am doing then my power becomes greater. I think I have learned that that is how you get things done here. Don't bypass the dean. I have learned that it is much easier to walk over to the other building and say, "I want to do this." He says, "Okay, let us take a look at how it fits in, fine, no problem," and it is done. I am launched, I will never have to worry about it. But if I have not done that simple conversation--like this re-entry project--I would have been talking about this for two years to try and get this off the ground. Now I have this great project around here. And all of a sudden, when you talk about power, I have people calling up all over the college,"Say, what is this project you're doing, can I be involved in it? Any money you need, or any support you need, let me know." My committee is a cross section of about twelve people from various parts of the college. It is kind of exciting. Anything you ask them to do, they come back and the next meeting it is all done. What it is making me see is the power of administration and how it can be successful.

I am ready to do the next thing. Because every one of those things that we talk about involves a whole slew of activities that you have to be good at and after you do them you want to go on to the next one. You want to move on, you want to get involved in other kinds of things. Now I have this huge project carrying me through the summer. But what is September going to be like? Academic advising is going pretty well. I am ready to give that up to somebody else. In other words I am ready to take on the next level, whatever that might be. There is one more level. You go from counselor to director of counseling to dean of students. There are not that many opportunities in this institution or any institution. It is kind of tough. But this might explain why we have this informal hierarchy, a nonofficial way of moving up. We can't give you an official promotion but what is a promotion--it is an opportunity to use new skills and develop new talent. Well, we are going to provide that for you, so when you leave here you don't just leave here as a counselor at a community college. You can say you were a coordinator of transfer affairs, a coordinator of academic advising, coordinator of orientation--which means you were not just a counselor.

I don't mind going to assistant dean somewhere in maybe three or four years. I am not ready yet. But I am getting a taste of it, getting a taste of hiring secretaries, getting a taste of some of the areas that directors get involved in.

There is a mentoring system here, an informal one. I see myself and a couple of other counselors as being under the director of counseling's wing, and he takes care of us. He is the person that has taught me how to do what I am doing and I just keep following him--that kind of mentor. He is just a little ahead and I am just trying to keep up.

People might think that I am abrasive, you know, pushing too hard. Sometimes I do it with my clients. I use a lot of reality testing--this is what you are doing so let's stop playing games. This is what you have to deal with and let us talk about how you are going to deal with it. For some it is a little too strong and I have to check myself. You see how people think and the things that come into play when they have to make a decision. I really don't have all the answers. I used to think, well, I have to read all of these books, but I am coming to the point where I will never get to that point where I will know everything. I don't feel insecure now about not having the answers. I am comfortable with silence.

I am starting to learn what this idea of counseling is all about. It takes a lifetime to get really good at it. There again is one of my sore points. The irony of it all is people look at counseling--you are just a counselor,you do this kind of stuff. How the profession is maligned. If people only really knew what it is about--to deal with another individual; and what it is to help someone make those kinds of decisions.

Administration versus counseling--I am torn. Because I like the counseling, I really like it. I really believe in it. What this human development stuff is all about, that is what counseling really means, and I am starting to grasp an understanding of it. I am torn. Which one do I really like better? I have to make up my mind, in terms of my future, if I want to get into private therapy or if I want to get into administrative work or if I want to get into teaching. I don't know.

Whenever you are dealing outside of the family of the counselors, you are at a new level. There is more to lose. Outside the office it is faculty, administrators, and if I am on a campus-wide committee there is a lot to lose. You represent the office. There is a lot of responsibility with that. I have known counselors who had horror shows in division meetings--people have turned on them and attacked them. The counselors came back bruised. Like academic advising. I have got to stand up there and talk to thirty-five math teachers--they are brutal. I think those division meetings are a good example of that kind of thing that could happen if you're embarrassed and they put you on the spot and they give you a hard time.

What do I want to do ? I really look at three things. I want to teach full-time, maybe two years, somewhere. I want to be in some kind of private therapy, have a practice somewhere, be in an association. I also have a strong desire to get into higher-level college administration work. I think that I am going to have to eliminate one.

I really believe in what the community colleges can do--not sounding pretentious about it, but I think they have a definite role in higher education. Just the basic role of making what we have to offer accessible to many of the kinds of people that we are serving. To be part of that gives me kind of a sense of meaning. Probably because of my own background. I am sure that has something to do with it. I mean the whole working-class-kid syndrome. I see me in a lot of students. There is no ivy on our walls. You just don't have that stereotypic student or family background type of people. Because we don't doesn't mean that the students are any less able or qualified, because we have students who are just as good, just as bright, and just as articulate as that other type of student. And I guess it is that--interactions with these types of people and seeing them move on and go on to bigger and better things-- that kind of makes it enjoyable for me.

You get glimpses of situations you know. I think what I see is a very typical working-class idea, a sense of real parochialism, provincialism. Their universe is the center of the world, there is no other life. I saw myself as that, and I saw my transition, and I know what change is. I know the kind of painful decisions that you have to make. You have the thirty-year-old mother, divorced, coming here, who only sees her opportunity as being a secretary. She came here to take a typing course, she enters full-time, and drags her two kids off to Smith in a special program. This woman, at the alumni breakfast that we had, she says, "Three years ago I didn't even know what Smith was." Countless stories like that, of a person who had a very limited perspective on what is education and now that world has totally opened up. I know what it means to take on a new idea, a new task. Our students don't have that skill yet, they are equipped to reject an idea or suggestion as being out of the realm of possibility. The higher the economic level, you have more opportunities to be exposed to a lot more of the kind of things that I think our students would like to get involved in, but they don't see it as a possibility. Like a sense of history, a sense of art, a sense of culture. They don't want to deal with that because it is not part of their "level." They are very job-oriented. If we can just get them away from thinking of training and get them to think of, "You are now a different person, you are being educated."

Why do you get into a profession? Counseling is obviously a helping profession but I don't see myself as this noble saint who is saving all these people. I provide any assistance that I can in the form of information and guidance and teaching new skills, but I am not rescuing anybody. My own personal philosophy is that it is counter-productive to just rescue someone. You are not in the long run helping. In this business I look at myself more as a teacher, helping this person develop new skills to go on and become more self-sufficient. If they are helped it is almost a by-product. I guess my sense of purpose is to see that person grow and develop, and that is the meaning I get out of it. I believe there are levels of helping. The initial reaction to help someone is to pick them up and that seems like helping--in other words just to basically rescue the person. The real skill comes in when you can help the person develop to be a self-sufficient human being. To rescue is building a lot of dependence. I knew theoretically and in my academic training that these things happen, but not until I got really into it did I really get to see what counseling is. I am waiting. In ten years, fifteen years, when I really get to see a lot of people. Then I can say I am a good counselor.

The three areas that I have mentioned that I am interested in, to get really good at you have to zero in rather than going on. Not your basic jack-of-all-trades. I have already been approached as to whether I would consider a full-time teaching position and I couldn't answer that. I teach part-time for the evening college. I have taught introductory psychology for the past couple of years and a couple of different sections of psychology in business and industry. I am just wondering, if you teach a four-course load and all the other parts of teaching and you have your office hours, would I like to do that? I have my own office, I have a lot more flexibility and I say, "Do I want to give that up?" I have always wanted to do everything and I am afraid that I will miss something. I am into adult development, a lot of Levinson and Gail Sheehy, adult change and transition. I am really involved with it here and there is just a lot more work to be done. I can't really do that unless I have the time and I think that a faculty member has a little bit more time for outside research . Maybe I will do that someday. I am not sure when, but administratively your whole life in the fast lane kind of thing, you can't really drop out, you have to keep working your way up . I am not sure that I want to get out of it yet because I think I enjoy that.

I have already found myself facing the administration dilemma more than the teaching dilemma. I have had good feelers on that. People are saying, "You ought to make your move now, it is going to be too late. Here is an assistant dean, you should apply for this, here is the director of this, you should apply for that," and I don't think I am ready and people say, "You are ready." I might be afraid, you know, uncomfortable, I like it here. That could mean anything, moving . I am not ready for all that change yet. I think I will know when I am ready. I know that I will outgrow this job. That doesn't mean that the job is not an important job, but I am looking for something else. I would like to move on and see myself be more influential, be more effective. I guess I think that all the projects that I am involved in--it is almost like a let-down when it is over. It is the process that is exciting, you know, it is the team work, the people, and seeing the fruits of your labor.

My mother would say, like she has always said, "Well, whatever makes you happy, we will support you any way we can." My father would kind of think about it and he would say, "That is really a good idea--keep going, don't stop." My father even said to me, and I couldn't believe it, "Are you getting paid for what you do?" I said, "Of course I am getting paid." I think he was thinking of when I was the intern and I don't think they ever made the connection that I was hired. He was thinking, when is he ever going to get a real teaching job? They say things like, "Well, don't stop now cause you will never go back again once you have made that decision." They really have a grin-and-bear-it kind of thing. There is a sense of accomplishment , a little house in the suburbs, a little business, the color T.V. My wife and I live in the city, in a tenement--we have gone the whole circle back. Their first reaction was, what are you doing in a place like this? I say, "Dad, look at my fire escape and look at the street," and they are shaking their heads. My wife and I both notice, when we deal with our respective in-laws, that we are different from our brothers and sisters, we are different from some of the friends that we knew in high school, some of the people in the community. I am not saying better, I am saying different. We are much more mobile. We have moved away, everybody is still there. We live far away in a strange city, and we do strange things. We both got our master's and now the possibilities of doctoral work, which is strange. I belong to a tennis club and a racketball club. That is strange to them.

I feel good about the fact that I can give something back, some kind of contribution. Seeing some of these people grow and change and have the opportunity to make the decision whether or not they want to maintain their life style, or incorporate some new things into their life styles. You know I am basically a romantic. Education and awareness are really the things that are going to get you what you want to get. People are coming from a certain perspective and we are providing them with a totally new one and that is a real strong sense of meaning, that I am a part of that process.

How I really put it all in perspective is that this is kind of like a stepping stone to whatever the next step might be. So maybe it goes back to saying that I don't want to just be a counselor. I think I want to use my experiences here to go on to the next level. I will have to find that level at some later date. It goes back to my other soap box and that is that it is the nature of the profession that the rewards are not built-in. You know you need motivation to provide the individual with some kind of growth, besides personal growth, some kind of rewards whether that is rank, salary. There is nothing where you are a counselor. The next level is director of counseling. That is not a promotion, that is a job change. As a faculty member you can be a really good teacher an instructor, assistant, associate, and full, that is a nice ladder, professionally and emotionally. So what do you have in this kind of profession--you have burnt-out people. You have people that go, "Why am I banging my head against the wall?" I am doing it now, I enjoy it, but I say, "How long can you keep this pace up without any kind of rewards?" It is too bad, you lose a lot of good people. People say, to hell with this, I am not doing this anymore. Look at all the people under thirty or around thirty. I mean we do not have any senior counselors at forty here.

Profile

DEBORAH PROCTOR

(Deborah Proctor, a woman in her early thirties, is a counselor at a community college in a small city in New York State. She was interviewed in her office in the spring of 1982.)

I am the youngest of five children and there is quite a span between our ages. The one that is closest to me is nine years older than I am. By the time I came along, even though my parents were just working people, they knew that they wanted me to go to college. I can remember when I was very young that when people would give me money my mother would say, "Put that in your bank for college." By the time I went through school I never really thought of doing anything else with my life. I just assumed that that is what you were supposed to do. I guess it was about fifth or sixth grade, it was at that point that I decided I was going to be a teacher of mentally retarded children. That was my goal.

My parents, for the most part, did not make a big deal over racial differences. We lived in a predominantly white neighborhood and when I went to school, the school was integrated. Yet as I began to excel in my courses I became the only Black student in my classes. I was on a safety patrol. I was in this class that was a special class, half sixth-graders and half fifth-graders, with this dynamic teacher who I just thought was wonderful. She said that the woman who was in charge of the safety patrol, her husband died, and we should go to the wake. And it was really a difficult thing for me because I had had a bad experience earlier with a funeral. My parents had taken me and I guess I just became traumatized in looking at this person, seeing this dead person there. But to do the right thing I went along with the class. It was a small room and you had to kneel down in front of the casket and say a prayer. So I am doing this and the teacher was white and her husband was white, and so I am saying my prayer and at this point she comes up to me and she patted me on my head and she said, "Oh, I guess he won't mind, dear." And instantly I knew what she meant, yet I never said anything about it. I just--I knew what she meant. It hurt me and I never even told my parents about it.

In junior high school I was in the junior honor society. I remember when I went to the counselor she was asking us what high school were we going to and you could go to the vocational or commercial high school or the academic high school. She says to me, "Well what high school are you going to?" I said, "I am going to the academic high school." And she says, "Well, have you thought about going to the commercial high school?" I said, "No, I haven't thought about it because I am going to become a teacher of mentally retarded children." She says, "Well, you still might want to give some thought about going to the commercial high school." I said, "Well, how could I do that if I want to go on to college and I want to be a teacher?" She kept pushing. My grades were appropriate for going to the academic high school. My career goals were appropriate and I realized that if I did not have this direction who knows what I would have done in terms of going to high school. If I had gone to her saying, "I don't know what I want to do," who knows what would have happened?

I did go on to the high school and eventually graduated from there in 1967. I went off to state college and was a major in special ed, mental retardation. And it was at this time I guess when some of the things began to happen. More of an awareness, the Black-is-beautiful movement, that whole coming of awareness for Black people. What it produced for me was a very militant reaction to being in this predominantly white school.

When I went to the state college they had 1600 freshman and of those I would say eight to ten minority students who were admitted in regular admissions. The minority population increased greatly, but it was essentially people who were academically and I guess financially disadvantaged and they were from the city that the college was in. So I don't know how many came, it might have been two hundred to three hundred, that first semester. That added a new dimension to the campus; they had never had so many Black students on campus. As time went on I began to see some of the institutionalized racism. Just policies that were structured maybe unknowingly but still were detrimental. With time I found I became much more militant and aggressive than I was by nature. It was almost a thing where I felt I had to do it. I had grown up in an integrated setting. I had a lot of friends who were white, some of whom really helped me. I've had experiences that were positive, yet the other kinds of things started happening.

The city itself was a very racist town. The Italians controlled the city government; the Jews lived on the outskirts. It didn't take you long to learn just how the city was divided. The Blacks lived on the east side, the Polish people lived over in their little section, one little quarter was Hispanic. I would have been prepared for racial difference, right, but to see all of these little ethnic groups and all of these different divisions was something new for me.

Then in the course of the four years Kent State took place.

Before that the minority students were all on strike because we wanted our student activity fee to be used for things that were relevant to us. We were out of school for about three weeks protesting and doing all kinds of things and it just sort of ended. Nothing really came out of it. Maybe a month later Kent State occurred . To me what Kent State indicated was how they felt about Black people and minorities. If they can just shoot down white students then it would have been very easy for them to shoot down Black students.

By this time I was a second semester junior, and after the first semester of my own personal boycott and the work that I had to make up and being so close to getting out of there, I was really beginning to mellow out. Because I began to see that these kinds of things were not going to lead to any significant change. I guess someone came over and said that on the other part of the campus windows were blown out. Now the campus was large, but I really couldn't believe that we wouldn't hear anything. So a couple of my friends and I went over to see what was really happening. The next thing we knew there were flashing lights and they were coming down the road. There were maybe twenty-five people around and these people started to throw stones at the cops and they just started shooting tear gas. So we run into a dorm, and the next thing we know they are shooting tear gas right up against the dorm. Everybody is just freaking out that this is happening. So we run into the next dorm which is a very large women students' dorm. As we get into the lounge the doors are closed behind us. We heard the thump and breaking glass. They were shooting canisters of tear gas through the glass doors. People were just in trauma. They didn't know what was happening. So finally somebody went in and pulled an alarm and that got most of the people out.

It was just a situation where you saw there wasn't any real rhyme or reason for the kind of reaction that they were displaying. After that I think they closed the school because it was the whole Kent State time. It was a very bitter time. At that point I guess I became less willing to be involved. I saw where people were not always committed to what they said they were. Group activities didn't seem to work. Leaders had their own personal reasons and motives for being leaders and they weren't always the ideals that they expounded to the masses that they were leading. So that was an eye-opener.

I was going out with a guy from a private university. So I went there a lot and was involved in their take-over of a building which , being a private school, was just so different. I mean they took over the faculty house. I mean there were no cops that came on the campus, because it's private. You know the people have money and stuff, oh, another story. Yes, that take-over there probably had more of an effect than anything else that I did because they have to this day a Martin Luther King Library and Cultural Center. So it actually made an impact on the administration there. It is still in existence today and going strong. The only thing that I can look back now and see is that probably the one thing that it did for us was it did make us take a stand at a very early age, at eighteen. I had to decide where my values started and where my parents' ended.

My parents were not in agreement with most of the things that I was doing at that time. I came home one weekend just for a weekend visit, and in the interim had gone to an Afro hairstyle. So I just walked in the door and my father was sitting there and he just was speechless. My father is never speechless and my mother screamed and you know the whole weekend that I was home my father was on me. "Get your hair done!" "How could you?" "You look horrible." He just went on and on and he gave me twenty dollars to get my hair done. They were not ready for that. When I would come home (we live in a white neighborhood) he would say something about the neighbors and I would say, "You shouldn't let these white people do things like this to you," and I would go on and he would say, "Stop, the windows are open, close the windows," and I said, "I don't care, this is your house, you own it." So it wasn't only what I was doing at school. It was this whole change in me, to become so vocal and outspoken.

My father was employed with the railroad as a baggage man for a number of years. Eventually he was laid off of that job. Then he went to work fora pen factory as a supervisor . And then after that job went on to be a security guard with a larger company. That was what he retired from. My mother didn't work for most of the time that I was growing up. Then she was a domestic worker . My father on the side gave piano lessons. His mother was a piano teacher and he had learned to play the piano and he played the piano in church. He gave piano lessons in the home and so he had his own kind of occupation. They were really I guess highly motivated people.

I look back on it now and I realize that the deed on the house is something like early nineteen hundreds. My grandfather decided to buy this property and there are pictures of the house when there were mostly woods around the house. They were there before most of the neighbors were there. My father lived there, and his brother, and when his father died they sort of were raising one another. Then all three brothers lived there. My mother tells me originally when they first married it was all divided up. His brother and his wife lived there and eventually my uncle had a house that is around the corner from my father's and the yards connect. They worked hard and they had the values of getting ahead and making something of yourself. My father would drive me crazy because you had to answer the phone and say, "Hello, may I help you?" You could not just say, "Hello." They had very specific goals. Every party that I went to I had to be driven and picked up. I would always complain, "Why do you have to come get me." It was those kinds of strict rules.

I was vice-president of the junior class in high school. I was in this group of people running the school. Suddenly you realize that this person's father is a doctor, this one's is a dentist. At that point I guess, there was some kind of feeling of, "Wow, that's not really good that my mother has to clean people's homes." That's the only time that I really thought about it. I think by the time I went to school, I realized that they were working so hard to send me. Once I came to college and came in contact with a much wider group of people, and met people whose parents were doctors yet they had no relationship with their parents,I began to realize that I really did have a good home life. My mother would just say to me, "You know that is why I want you to go to school, so that you will not have to do what I have to do." I remember one time I guess she had a minor operation and she took me with her to clean a house and there was an older woman in the hall, I guess a grandmother of the people that were there. I was in one room and I was supposed to be dusting and I sat down in the chair and went to sleep. Then the older woman is coming looking for me and bringing me some iced tea and they come into the room and I am sleeping. My mother was embarrassed. "You know you really have to go to college, cause you are not going to make it, you really won't make it." I think by that time I began to take it as , you know, they worked very hard to get me here, and I became proud of their sacrifice.

None of my siblings went to college. The sister closest to me received a scholarship and she went to nursing school. Before I went to college, two closest friends were both going to be teachers. I knew that I was going away to school, I mean there had to be a way. If they told me that I had to commute, I don't think I would have gone. That was just not college to me. I wanted to be away on my own at college.

During my student teaching experience I realized that I did not want to teach. I suddenly realized that in elementary school you are locked away from what is going on in the world and even though I liked teaching I don't want to work in a small school, with twenty-five adults, the rest children, and not know what is going on in the world. I wasn't ready for that. So I decided that I would go to graduate school. I went to the placement office. I did not speak to anybody about what I wanted to do there. Found some books on counseling. Figured counseling was good because it was an off-shoot of education and it seemed like something I almost did innately. So I started looking at counseling programs. I was looking at New York City and California, really wanted to go to California. I was still going out with the same person who was now graduating and looking at law schools. He did not get into Stanford. He did get into Columbia so then I decided I will go to New York. The program was vocational and rehabilitation counseling, it was a two-year master's program. I felt that would give me some time to figure out what I wanted to do. So at that point I went to school in New York City and within a month broke up with my boyfriend.

My first semester I am breaking up from this encounter, and my only determination was that I had to get good grades because there is no way that he would be able to say that he had an affect on me, that I couldn't do well in school. So I stayed in, listened to sad records all the time, and studied. I had pretty good grades my first semester, a couple of A's, a couple of B's, you know. Second semester I am over this. I begin to look at these classes and realize that this place is not challenging for me. I had an instructor who read from the textbook. After the first year I decided to drop out of graduate school, and then I met someone before the summer ended. He just happened to be driving down the street and he stopped me and he said, "Leaving school? Why you won't have anything if you leave at this point." We talked and at the end I just thought, well, okay, I'll go back and give it a shot.

After graduate school I worked at a nursing school in a hospital originally designed to educate minority nurses. That was still their primary focus. It was the first time they ever had a counselor in the school, so it was a new position. I was the guidance counselor for the nursing students. It was personal counseling, career counseling, transfer counseling. Most were returning adult students. They had an open admissions policy, so sometimes they would have students who academically were having difficulty, adult women who were coming back; and many of them went through having marriages disrupted--their only motivation for coming back was to help better their family, but their husband had trouble dealing with that. This was in the early stages of returning and working. We had mothers, single parents, you know, the woman who isn't married who has two or three children and wants to come off of social services and welfare and become a nurse, so this person coming out of our hospital school of nursing with a diploma will be the first person in their family to do anything beyond high school. The school closed. Probably I wouldn't have left at that time. So we started going to a phasing-out process and that took about a year and a half. So I stayed until the end.

I worked in Harlem, you know, so I just was really involved with being around Black people almost totally. So when they sent me to this conference at this small school upstate it never really occurred to me that it would probably be a lot of white people. There were only two Black people in the whole meeting of about a thousand people. It was not something related to nursing schools, it was something related to education. I was waiting to go to dinner, I think, and I was just curious, since I was up here, to find out where the students are and where they congregate and what the minority students do at this school. And I saw this young man coming across the campus. I said, "Oh, he is a good person to ask," and so I just asked him. We started talking, he introduced me to his friends, and he turned out to be my husband.

[At this college] my official title is Assistant Director of Career Development, Placement and Transfer Services. That is a mouthful. My job is mainly concerned with transfer counseling, because originally when I came that was my position title, transfer counselor. My role expanded from transfer counseling into career development placement. What happened is that at the time that we brought the offices together it was a feeling that the liberal arts population at the school was in a slight decline, and the career programs were gaining in importance and growing in size. Probably the very next year the trend started to reverse itself. Even though we weren't getting the traditional transfer student from liberal arts, we were still maintaining large numbers of transfer students because of the career program students beginning to transfer in greater numbers.

I guess what is most interesting is just finding out that there are a lot of things that young people don't know that they assume that they do know. One example that comes to mind is just in using a guidebook that I use often. You can find the schools within each state that offer a particular major. On the side it will have the letters "B" for bachelor's, "M" for master's, and you just go through and I'll say to a person, Well, you know this is a bachelor's, and then I suddenly find out that the student doesn't really understand the difference between the degrees. It kind of catches you off guard because somehow you feel that a person would know this, but then, when would they really be faced with it--to know these differences? Or just seeing that the students don't understand the transfer end of it. When I say "transfer to a four-year school," they sometimes interpret that to mean four more years.

For a while I remember I was getting a lot of questions that pertained to completing applications and reading catalogues. And some of the catalogues, I admit, are not written for students. I had a catalogue and the student brought it in, didn't understand it. I looked at it; we went over it and finally I had to call the school because I just could not understand what they were saying. But for a while with the problems that students were bringing in with applications, with catalogues, it really began to taint my perspective on the college student that we had here, and I began to feel, my goodness, you know, what are our students like? They can't fill out their applications where it says put your name. They are not sure about the questions which seemed to be so elementary and that should have been very clear. I really began to look at it and realized that because this is a counseling office most of the people that come in here were the students who needed this kind of help. And those who could readily read an application and can fill out this application, would have no need to come here.

I have gone from having appointments that were scheduled for a half-an-hour for an individual to a walk-in system. Walk-in hours are advertised. I set them up a week in advance, each day, certain parts of the day will be walk-in hours. During that time I am here and a student who wants a question answered just comes and gives their name. So I get a piece of paper with a name, John Smith. He comes in, I say, "Good morning, John, what can I help you with?" And then he might say, "Well, I am confused about what I want to do." My next questions would probably be, "Well what program are you in?" Now I know that this person is thinking about transfer, but he is not in a transfer program. So there will be certain problems. So then I might ask him, "Well, do you have any idea of what schools you have in mind? Are you interested in staying locally or are you interested in going away?" Sometimes an appointment with a person is ten minutes long, and sometimes it is forty-five minutes. I tried group appointments, they weren't ready for that. The appointment system--my calendar was booked; if you came in today and said that you wanted to see me, we would be scheduling you for two weeks from today. And then what happens is two weeks from today you have forgotten that you had an appointment with me. The walk-in system has really worked.

If students really were to have an effective transfer I think that I would like to see them probably at least three times. Have them come in once and get them started on classes. Tell them how to use some of the reference books. Give them the booklet on transfer that I have written and get them started that way. They have begun to get a sense of some schools. Then talk with them after that point to see if they are on the right track: are they being realistic, have they looked at schools in different states? Do they realize if they go to school in California how often they will be able to come home? "Do you have relatives out there? Well, Florida is good but you realize that state financial aid will not transfer outside of the state? Is that a factor in making your decision?" Work with them at that point to get them to narrow it down and then after we have sort of focussed a little bit more realistically, have them go back out there and look at schools again. Plan some visits to schools. Then I like to have them come back after they have visited the school and we talk about the experience.

There are some little rewards, this one for example. A thank-you note from one of my advisees. I have this particular program that I advise, Environmental Science . It is designed here specifically for one school within the state system. This student was in another program and decided on this school and we had to work out his going to this school. He was a very good student. We were working on getting his courses. He realized that the program that he thought he wanted was in reality not the program that he wanted. And I had been saying to him at various points, "Now make sure that you are in the right program." That meant that we had to revise the courses that he was planning.

They had accepted him and yet now he had to change. So in going through that, in dealing with the school and dealing with him, it all became straightend out. To me it wasn't anything that I felt was out of the ordinary, just something that I would do. And I was surprised when he sent me the card. And it said, "Thank you for all the help that you gave me, the trouble you went through on my behalf. I want you to know that I really appreciate all the help that you gave me."

Another story that I remember is one that is fairly negative. I had to deal with a student whose expectations were just completely off base. His plans were not realistic. He came in as any other student would. We started talking and he talked about the school that he wanted to go to. At that point I asked him what his grade-point average was. He told me his grade-point average was C, he had finally gotten it up to a C. "Well," I said, "You may have a problem in transferring to this particular school that you want to go to. They really require a much higher grade-point average for people who are in the business program ." That's my feeling, trying to break it gently, and we may have some degree of difficulty. In the back of my mind I knew instantly this person is not getting into that school for this program. Because his grades are just not competitive enough for this particular school and the program is a high-demand program. I then asked if there were any other schools the individual was looking at. He said, "I really want to go to this school." So I said, "This is normally the grade-point average they take. As you can see you are not at that level. You will have difficulty getting in." He started to ask me, "Well, what can you tell me or what can you do for me that will help me get into this school?" So I said, "I really don't know. " And then he mentioned that his faculty advisor had told him that he would do whatever he could to get him into this school. So he said, "What can you do to help me get into this school?" It was a state school so knowing someone won't really give you an edge. State schools look primarily at your grade-point average, how many credits you have; and if you are a junior and you applied early enough, you will get it. If you don't meet the criteria you don't get in. So I explained that, and he said again, "I want to know what you can do for me," and by this time I began to pick up that the person had some problems. I was trying to not come down hard on him and offer several other options. He just continued to press me and we always came back to the same point. I finally said, "There is nothing that I can do to get you into this school. I can't do anything, I can't call anybody, because I know you will not get into this school, and I know that you cannot handle the work there." And that's like taking me to the absolute limit, because I believe that it is never good to make such an absolute statement. I am very much aware of what you say to students and how it is worded so that they don't get put down from somebody who is in a position of authority. But in this particular instance I felt that he had to hear it directly. And when I said that to him he just stood and just walked out. Didn't say a word.

This is an interesting counseling job in that you are doing counseling and you are not really doing counseling. I'm not doing personal counseling in terms of sexual problems, parental problems, financial, not getting into these things; and yet I remember when I was in graduate school I was told that behind every vocational counseling issue there are usually personal problems. But it is factual kinds of things people are coming in for, and yet it's really sometimes, you know, it is counseling.

I'm on one college committee which is a standing committee. I'm also the secretary of the curriculum committee. There is no doubt that the good-old-boy system is in operation and is still alive and well. We don't have too many women that are in positions of leadership authority. I had a discussion with a supervisor when I wanted to know about making more money, and the response was "Why, isn't your husband working? Doesn't your husband make enough money?" My comment was, my husband does not work here. I do. If somebody is making comments that I think are condescending or are coming off as inappropriate, you know, continually sexist, I'll probably tell them.

You find that your natural tendency to communicate is suppressed. My natural way of speaking. I was not raised to be totally immersed in the street culture, to speak street language. There are aspects of Black language that are almost universal among Black people. There are some elements of street language that are Black language, that I sometimes use here. Let's say if somebody came in, if I knew the person very well, and he came in and was really dressed and looked very nice I might say, "Boy, you are really clean to the bone." You say that to someone here and he says, " What do you mean?" You realize that he missed the essence of what you are saying.

I worked in a predominantly Black school before I came here and what I would say the difference here is that this one sort of lacks life. This is a very nice place to work, nice students. I have a lot of good times, you know, I think people like me and I like a lot of the people that I work with. But being Black is really a matter of adapting. We have two cultures, a culture of our own and then the culture of the majority people. To function in certain situations you are going to have to know the majority culture, speak the language, the manners , the music, whatever it is. On the other hand, the majority culture never at any point seems to be aware that there is any culture outside of their own.

I had an informal discussion with the dean the other day on recruiting minority students and her reasoning was that the professionals that are here might feel uncomfortable going into a predominantly Black situation to do recruiting. I said, "Well, that may well be true that they might feel uncomfortable but that would be their professional duty to do that." We have Black students and "You know," she said, "They all congregate over there by themselves," and I said, "Yes, because they have that same degree of being uncomfortable in this situation that you just mentioned that those white people would have going into a Black situation." It just frustrates me and bothers me. I am not saying that the person consciously is a racist, but the background that she came from would be one that would make it difficult for her to really understand.

The thing that makes it very difficult compared to where I was before is that that was a more comfortable situation, more of a situation where I had friends. My friends were people that I worked with. Work was not necessarily as separate. There are certain things about working here that are just sort of one side of me. I am not multi-faceted here, I would say that most of the people see me from one perspective. I don't socialize with the people that I work with. Our staff has had one social event, I have gone to some dinners, some presidential things. One or two people that I have worked with I have seen outside of work. For the most part the people that I work with, I do not socialize with. One of the things about the number of Black people that are employed by the school is that there are only two faculty members and they have been here an awful long time. At one point there might have been four or five of us as administrators. But the jobs that they hold are not substantial in terms of impact on the institution.

My parents did not tell me, "You have got to go to school and you are going to run up against people that do not like you because you are Black,"--or colored or whatever they said at that time. I went in with these blinders on just accepting people as individuals and built up a series of hurts. If I tell a story I say, "Yes, the other day this lady got on the bus and really looked crazy and was hysterical." And then you would find tht one of your friends who happens to be white would say, "Yes, the other day this Black woman got on the bus and it was so funny." And you start to see that whenever they talked about a person they always indicated that the person was Black. I would just say this lady, this man, this horrible man.

Being so caught up in a racial hatred is only detrimental. I am beyond that and I am proud. I think that working here it is like sort of working through that whole time of okay, what are you going to do, what is your impact going to be. In the sixties on college campuses I was a part of things and movements, but I don't think they were consistent with my natural sense of who I am. I am never going to lead a group of people to march on Washington. That is not me. I am just not that kind of a person. So in being here I can see where I am doing what I can do to promote the kind of attitude that I think really should be among people. Most of the students that I see are students that probably never in their life have interacted with a Black person and had the Black person be in the position of authority. For some of them it might be their first real interaction. They never have had to come to a Black person and say, "Can you help me?" I think that is the impact that I am making being here. That will be my legacy and it will probably never be written up anywhere. I know that it is taking place and I think that that is real important. I don't think that a person of the majority culture naturally and without giving it a thought seeks assistance from somebody who is a part of the minority culture.

It still does produce the same kind of strong emotional reaction to know that people are biased just because of the color of a person's skin. That an individual will tell me things about themselves, their family and about what is going on or ask for advice about the most personal kinds of things and to see that same individual outside and have him walk by you-- I can recognize that they are not saying, "Oh, there is Mrs. P. I won't speak to her because I don't need her today." This is not personal, it's a culture, it's a racial thing. You don't look at Black people for the most part. Discrimination on the basis of your race is so ingrained. It is part of society that it is never going to change. If everybody in the world comes together in peace, love, and harmony, it could change but I just don't believe that that is going to happen. You do learn to deal with it. I am more sensitized to this type of thing than my husband is. I'll say, " Didn't you notice this?" He says, "Well, I don't think like that." For me it is always there, I think it would always be there no matter what.

I like what I am doing. I have certain problems. I would prefer to be more in charge. I constantly look at my own career development in terms of do I want to go to another position where I would have more authority. There are probably a lot more things I could do that are more exciting. Being not only Black but being a woman and going to college. You know, when I went to school, women went to school to be teachers, nurses, unless they came from backgrounds where the parents were able to offer them some other choices because they knew that there was more out there that women could do. You were just geared in certain ways. I never opened my mind to think about anything. I don't know if I would ever be happy working in industry but I never gave it a thought. I never, I didn't think about anything. The only other thing that I ever thought of was being a nurse. But I just feel that there are many other things. There are a variety of careers out there in the world. Like I realized that in high school certain courses, like a chemistry course there and a course here, that I enjoyed I never pursued because I just went into this, okay I'll do this. I didn't decide on teaching mentally retarded children because I had a great knowledge or even a lot of background information about how much teachers make, where they work, what it is like to teach. I think that there are so many things out there that people could be doing. Probably with exposure I might have taken a different course. You know to a certain extent going to school for education was a good major. I enjoyed it. But it was too soft a curriculum for me .

Perhaps if I had had some guidance along the way . . . I wanted to change my trigonometry class from the top class to a different class. Because a few people were switching out of the class,I switched out. The teacher I went into was very nice and wonderful and everything else but I got to the regents and ended up with a seventy-five which was really a shattering kind of thing for me and my interpretation of that was, forget it, I can't do math. I just barely passed. And as I look back on that I realize now that it wasn't probably the math. There was some reason why they were not assigning the top students to that particular instructor in the first place. They probably knew that she had a nice friendly approach but she didn't cover all of the material that you needed to know. Looking back on these kinds of things, who knows what that would have been to have just a different sense of your capabilities.

When I was in New York living and working in Harlem, for the first time I looked at a real ghetto . Because I had such a good job I would shop and I had charge cards to Bloomingdale's and all those stores. So I would take a bus right from my house and just go right down to Bloomingdale's. I would start out up here and I wouldn't think too much about it and then I start going through the neighborhoods and they start changing and suddenly you are in Bloomingdale's. And I look at people and I go look at something that is sitting out on the shelf and it is one hundred dollars and there are a lot of them too. And then you realize, my goodness , one hundred dollars for this pair of pants. Then you realize that you see people wearing this kind of thing just to go shopping. Then I might get back on the bus and go and buy fresh vegetables and realize that there was a difference in the prices . You pay more for stale vegetables in Harlem than you pay for fresh vegetables on 86th Street. Then back on the bus and watch how as you started through 59th Street then it changes and the neighborhoods deteriorate as you go back up. That was a frustrating kind of thing to see, that there was this ghetto and a life style and that most of them were stuck on that tread mill for the rest of their lives because they did not have the skills that would enable them to break out of it. Nobody was teaching them to study hard, get work. That hurt me a great deal . I realized there was very little that could be changed about it and it was depressing. So I was very depressed and very distraught. Religion as I had known it could not fill that void.

Fortunately everything just sort of fell into place in choosing graduate schools, ending up in this city and working here. No great plan or direction. Now I am much more careful in planning what I want to do. I am pleased with where I am and where I live. But I think there are a lot of other things that I probably could be doing that I would be just as happy doing .

Commentary

Julia Alvarez was raised in a tradition of Christian service. Work to her always meant working with and for people. Despite some affinity for math and science in high school, she never seriously considered options that would be inconsistent with that governing philosophy. At the same time, she carried within her a sense that she was special, talented, always capable of doing anything she wanted to do.

Her jump from the ranks of secretary to the professional status of counselor, something that had occurred only once before in her community college's history, seemed to be at the time a confirmation of her internal sense of talent and worth. It was a fulfillment of personal ambition consistent with her commitment to being of service to people. And so it was for the first few years. She learned to be a "professional." She learned what it was like to work in a situation in which she had some individual freedom, some room for judgment and personal autonomy, and some expectation that she take initiative.

In her first few years, she flourished in the range of activities her work encompassed. She took on her counseling with energy and commitment and developed a specialty in academic counseling about math anxiety. She worked on committees that were important in the college, hoping that her unencumbered commitment to students' interests would help shape policies and procedures to the students' advantage. She took on teaching responsibilities that multiplied her previous efforts at one-to-one academic counseling on the same subjects. She had never really seen herself as having a career as a secretary, even though she understood and respected the complexity of secretarial work. The move to the counseling position seemed like a perfect fulfillment of a sense of opportunity and personal empowerment.

But the fact of the matter turned out to be that while the role of the counselor in her community college carried with it a sense of opportunity and power significantly different from that of the role of secretary, that role was severely circumscribed in comparison to that of faculty and administrators . She shared with other women in this study a realization that her opportunity to move up in the system was curtailed because she was a woman. Her comments on the male-dominated administrative hierarchy, the types of administrative positions that have tended to become feminized in college hierarchies, and the force of the norm that positions of power will be held by men, highlight the day-to-day sense of constraints which women at work struggle with as they do their jobs.

But the even more telling aspect of her work experience is that her role of counselor in the community college is much more detrimental to her sense of opportunity and power than the fact that she is a woman. She was aware of sexism, but always believed that as an individual woman she could do anything. What was facing her, with a force that she had not anticipated nor understood when she took the position, was the impact of working in a position which was near the bottom of the professional totem pole in her community college. Even if she rose to the top within her counseling area she would not be very high up on the ladder of status, pay, or power.

Built into the structure of the counselors' work, which Alvarez took on with such enthusiasm and growing competence, are factors that could hardly be better designed for a state of personal enervation. Neither faculty nor administrator, counselors do the work of both. They teach, do program development, sit on committees, solve problems that develop. Because they do not have the autonomy of faculty, they are expected to be around all the time, and as they are around, they can be called upon to do what needs to be done. Because they do not have the same freedom in scheduling their time that faculty have, and because they are expected to be around, they become treated as indispensable. Even though their time and actions are circumscribed by the notion that they have to be available, counselors are perceived by faculty as not working very hard. Consequently counselors always have to appear as if they are doing important work. If they want to chat with their colleagues for a few minutes, it is best that they do so behind closed doors lest they reinforce notions that faculty somehow have of the relative unimportance of their work.

From the counselors' perspective, faculty often mistrust them. They are happy to have counselors do the scheduling, the recruitment, the orientation, the host of student personnel administrative tasks that go on in a college, yet faculty do not seem to really value that work. Counselors' work is seen as secondary to and peripheral to their primarily instructional roles. As colleges grew, faculty were happy to have the counselors take over jobs they once did, but at the same time they resented the increasing bureaucratization of processes and the fragmentation of the holistic relationship they formerly had with students. While the counselors aspire to a professional identity with the faculty, the faculty see them as quasi-administrators without the power and authority of the administrators .

The consequence is a low level but continuous sense of vulnerability and a threat to dignity that Julia Alvarez finds wearing away at her as she comes to work each morning. When we first heard Julia's story, we were concerned that it might be idiosyncratic, more a reflection of her personal history and personality than of the structure of counselors' work in community colleges, or perhaps unique to Massachusetts community colleges. But the same dynamics are in evidence across the country. For example, in chapter eleven, "The Few Among the Many," we present the profile of Cheryl Collins, a counselor in a suburban community college in California. Collins has a master's degree in clinical psychology, earns a salary comparable to faculty, and yet she speaks of the same feelings of vulnerability vis-a-vis faculty. Whether the counselor is working in a community college in Massachusetts or California, earning a relatively modest stipend or a comparatively handsome salary, counselors seem to become scapegoats for things that go wrong in the institution.

Julia Alvarez is willing to contend with those aspects of her work. She is working through her union to try to make the working conditions of counselors more equitable . She may even decide that she has learned as much as she can from her job and that it is time to seek a position that provides her with more autonomy, responsibility, and power. She consciously weighs the amount of competition with her personal life that she is willing to tolerate in order to gain a position with increased responsibility.

Near the end of the interview, however, we touched on an area with which it seemed more difficult for her to contend, an area that was disquieting and for which there seemed little effective individual action she could take. Her commitment to Christian service and her political sensitivity to injustice, heightened by her growing up in Central America, confronted her with the awareness that the community college tended to perpetuate inequities. As an institution it did not challenge the basic social class structure and it exerted significant pressure to conform rather than to critique. Julia Alvarez expresses a troubled sense of participation in reinforcing the status quo, rather than changing the system. It is disquieting that there does not seem to be a constructive way for her to handle the realistic conclusion: no educational institution, despite its rhetoric, can for long challenge the social structure in which it exists and be simultaneously supported by that social structure. When confronted by that realization, many in her place would have decided that the best they can do is to do good work and hope to be effective with a few individuals. Given the diffuse nature of her work in the community college, however, it would be difficult to define what good work would be, or to focus enough on any one aspect of it to achieve a sense of excellence. While she has had individual successes with students, those successes cannot ameliorate her larger sense of injustice . She is in a position of ambiguous power, status, and respect in her institution, yet she takes on much personal responsibility for its successes and failures. Diminishing enthusiasm for her job is the natural result of taking individual responsibility for conditions beyond her control.

Julia Alvarez grew up with a sense of always being on the outside. Her position on the margins heightened her sensitivities and contributed to an ability to analyze the structure of situations. When Richard Soleti moved from the city to the suburb, his position on the margin also provided him with an education about American social structure. He learned about social class in his first-hand encounters with his friends' homes and country clubs. Using sports as an equalizer, however, he moved in both the world of the affluent and that of the working class.

After formative years at the state university during the Vietnam War in which he came to grips with a new sense of politics and the difference between his values and that of his parents, he worked as a bartender for three years. He finally made his move to graduate school, finding the field of counseling consistent with his own background in pyschology and his personal interest in figuring out what he was going to do with his life. His master's degree in counseling and his moving from an internship to a full-time professional position in his counseling department came together to transform him from life on the edges to the middle lane of a track of upward mobility.

Soleti speaks of the same wide range of activities that Alvarez does. He counsels, working with students on everything from mundane academic questions to deeply personal troubles. He works on committees, is a union advocate for professional staff, develops new student personnel programs. He learns how to operate within the hierarchy of the college. He teaches enough to be asked to consider becoming a full-time faculty member in the psychology department . He does not describe himself as a workhorse. He thinks he has the best job in the college. He can teach, he can work individually with students, he can tap into the power system of the college to develop programs.

Soleti has a considerable sense of his own power. He does not let faculty browbeat him. When asked to think about joining the faculty, he tentatively decides that he prefers the flexibility that his current position offers in comparison to what he understands of the work of faculty. His major concern is one of linking a sense of opportunity and power to an area in his work on which he would like to focus. He likes teaching, but sees it as too restrictive. He has gained valuable experience as a counselor, and he is tempted to pursue that in more depth, but he is not sure of the opportunities in the field. He never thought he would enjoy administration, but as he has become more experienced in negotiating the chain of command in the college, he is more and more attracted to the sense of power he perceives in the administrative route. What he does know is that he does not want to remain "just a counselor."

This sense of being "just a counselor" has developed in him, ironically, when he seems to be at the peak of his powers as a counselor. Soleti recognizes the complexities of counseling in a community college and is especially suspicious of the "rescue syndrome" that some counselors fall into. He knows that therapists in the long run cannot rescue anyone and, at the same time, work to sustain and develop that person's independence. As he is getting more skilled as a counselor, he is also getting more skilled in developing programs that reach out to students. But he does not sense a career ladder within the counseling department that will allow him to continue to grow, learn, and use his experience. He identifies with the students in the community college; he recognizes himself in their working-class backgrounds. He is sensitive to their way of rejecting possibilities for themselves and he works to affect the way they think of their education in the community college. He is energetic, competitive, experienced, and insightful about his work. He does not articulate the same sense of complexity that Julia Alvarez did; he sees himself on a track moving up, and that may mean moving out of counseling in the community college. For Soleti the counseling position in the college is seen basically as a stepping stone to other positions.

Deborah Proctor, a Black counselor in a New York State community college, shares a great deal with Richard Soleti. Going to college at the height of the Vietnam War and the rise of Black militancy, she sees her college education as a confrontation with the values and attitudes with which she was raised as a child. Whereas earlier in her life she had swallowed the hurt of racial insults, in college she learned two important lessons: how to fight for what was her due; and the limits of fighting with the majority culture and where adaptation had to begin. Kent State was a powerful warning to her: if that is what the establishment would do to white students, what would they do to Black students?

She went to a prestigious graduate school to major in vocational counseling. She saw the hollowness of reputation as she experienced dry and uninspired lectures from professors who were eminent in her field. She persevered, got her degree, and got a position counseling in a diploma program that trained Black women for nursing. That program was closed and she moved upstate to take a position in the predominantly white community college where she is now. In the total faculty there are only two other Blacks, and she is the only Black in the counseling department. Like the participants presented in chapter eleven, she is one of the very few Blacks among a great many whites.

She does her job as a transfer counselor with a business-like efficiency. She does not get into psychotherapeutic work with her students, even though she recognizes that behind problems in picking a career or sorting out issues related to transferring to a four-year college there may well be deeply personal problems. There is a tinge of impatience in her descriptions of counseling. She did not at first understand students who had difficulty filling out an application.

Part of her situation can be understood in terms of the isolation she feels , an isolation we have witnessed before for Josephine Sanders (chapter seven) and will see again for others (chapter eleven).

Like Josephine Sanders and other people of color who are faculty or counselors, she lives in two cultures, the culture of the majority white and her minority Black culture. She is constantly adapting to the majority culture and chafes at the knowledge that the whites do not have to adapt to hers. She lives with the fact that she can be walking on campus and pass a student with whom she recently has had a conference in which personal matters have been discussed, but when they pass on campus, there is no eye-contact. She believes that white people often do not look at Blacks because they have no need to do so. She feels invisible sometimes on campus. At the same time, she, like other minority faculty in predominantly white situations, feels she is doing some good. She knows that most of the white students with whom she deals have never in their life had to ask a Black person for help, have never dealt with a Black person in authority, and she is willing to play that role for them.

What the portraits of the counselors we have presented in this chapter did not reflect was any clear evidence of supportive participation in what Burton Clark described as the "cooling out" process (Clark 1960, pp. 71-77). The counselors we interviewed appeared to be committed to working with working-class students to expand their sense of options. Julia Alvarez was conscious of and troubled by her perception that the community college did very little to challenge the basic inequities of the society. The percentage of students who transfer from community college to four-year schools has dropped to such a low level --five percent, according to Cohen and Brawer(1982, p. 301)-- that the issue for the counselors we have presented in this chapter is not one of "cooling out" but rather of "heating up." The national context has changed greatly since the days of the fifties and early sixties which provided the background for Clark's study.

The counselors presented in this chapter were involved deeply in their own search for power and opportunity in a way that connects almost directly to the stories of students in community colleges whom we interviewed. The counselors' profiles reflect a dialectic involving opportunity and constraint, affirmation and denigration, power and impotence. Each is searching for his or her own resolutions of those tensions. For each it seems that the position of counselor can be affirmed most as a stepping stone to something else.

Chapter Eleven

The Few Among the Many: The Work of Minority Community College Faculty in Predominantly White Institutions

Introduction to the Profiles

The faculty whose profiles follow are members of a minority who work in predominantly white community colleges. The salient characteristic of each participant's work setting is that it is "skewed." That is, the setting is one in which the relative number of faculty who would be considered members of a minority, compared to those who would be considered nonminority, is approximately one to ten (Kanter 1977, p.208). Kanter analyzes the effects of relative numbers on the experience of women at a corporation she studies. Her analysis suggests that relative numbers would be significant in the experience of minority faculty. We believe that the profiles we are about to present speak poignantly to the issues Kanter raises.

Profile

CHERYL COLLINS

(Cheryl Collins, a woman in her thirties, works as a counselor and teacher in a California community college. She was interviewed in the summer of 1981, once in her office and twice at her home.)

I grew up in the city for the first ten years and then we moved to the suburbs when I was in fifth grade. When I was in the city I was a model student, I didn't have to do much except be quiet and good. I didn't have any idea of how bright I was or wasn't at that time. The idea in the city was to keep kids controlled and quiet. So I was good and clean and quiet. The neighborhood was integrated, I remember just playing and a lot of fun and a lot of warmth. My grandmother was around and my mother was working and my father was working and everything, you know, was terrific.

Like a lightning bolt, everything was turned totally upside down from what it was in fourth grade to what it was in fifth grade. My parents, what they were saying was, it's not that we don't trust you and love you and all that stuff. We just think you'll have a better chance in this other environment than you will in the city and we're going to give you the best shot we can. And even though we know all these other things are going to come up, we still feel that we can best guarantee your getting through college and being able to take care of yourselves if we make this move.

I remember looking down over the suburbs one time and saying to myself, "I beat you. I didn't let you beat me," and there was this sense that I had won, that the suburbs had in some way tried to take something from me and I didn't let it, didn't let that happen. I remember going to my ten-year high school reunion and being slightly amused that I might not remember who they were but they would damn sure know who I was. I mean there was no way that they could not have known; I would be the only Black person walking into the room. I got my hair done in a big afro and wore a long dress, it was just playing the role. Somehow I needed to do that. It was real clear to me that something had happened to me in that experience that hadn't happened to a whole lot of people and that I felt and still do feel that I had come out ahead. If I was the only Black person that they were ever going to know, it would be a positive experience for them.

At that time we were the only Black family in the town. Coming from a very mixed neighborhood and then moving out ... I guess it is hard not to work up the emotion that was involved in going through that process. Example: the first week or so that I was in fifth grade, you had to pass a times tables test in order for the teacher to let you get into the book. She gave you a hundred little problems and you had to get through them in five minutes and miss no more than three in order to be allowed to get into the book. Well, in the city I had only been up to about the five or six times table so I was behind from the very beginning and it stayed that way for a couple of years. My mother practically went to school with me all over again, would sit up night after night after night tutoring and going and talking to the teachers. So by the time I was into seventh and eighth and ninth grade I was doing fine, but initially it was a real cultural shock to be out there. As well as all the stuff that goes along with being Black in an all-white area. Certain kids weren't allowed to play with me, and parents had ideas about what I was like and what I wasn't like and whether I should be at their house and whether their kid should be at my house and all that other stuff that goes along with that.

My parents had a very strong feeling about education, and their primary goal for us was that you will graduate from college. I knew I was going to college before I knew what college was. They were very clear that they wanted us to go to school. They got what they wanted, both of their kids have degrees. That was very very important to them, and they felt that we would get a much better education in the suburbs than we would in the city. And there is no question about that. When I was in the city they wouldn't let you take your books home because they didn't know what you were going to do with them. You didn't have homework in the city. We got out there, we had homework the first night . The kids that I grew up with in the suburbs--everybody was going to college.

Being behind from the very beginning and having to study so hard to catch up and feeling like I had to prove myself, I was a good little kid because everybody knew who I was. There was no way for me to go just anywhere in town;if they didn't know my name, they certainly knew that I was the Black kid. There were parts of that that were fun and then there were parts of it that were painful. Being identifiable all the time means that I was constantly aware when I would walk into a store or walk into a room that people were watching me. My behavior was being judged and generalized. There were certain kinds of situations where I felt that I had to be more careful or more good or as smart and as equal and well-dressed and as well-mannered and as well-whatever as anybody else, as strong or stronger. And to not let some of the racist little things that happened really touch me. Things like a parent deciding that I couldn't come to their house and I had never met the parent. So it wasn't me, it was the fact that I was Black. It wasn't that I had done anything "wrong". Somebody that I had grown up with, that lived down the street from me for seven or eight years and she got married and I couldn't go to the wedding because her grandmother didn't like Black people. I had never met her grandmother, you know. That always shocked me, and sometimes there were some very gutsy people that I dealt with and some kids would defy their parents. I learned about where my own strengths were, what I could deal with and what was justice and what was fair. My mother and I were very close and still are, and she was very open; any time something hurt me or any time there was something that I didn't understand or any time I needed somebody to talk to, she was always very much there. And my brother and I--we talked a lot.

By the time I got into high school, I did everything that was social with the exception of dating. I was in what would be considered the top group. I was in that group and the line was only drawn racially when it was junior prom or the senior ball. I decorated for all those things and then turned around and walked out. I was very active, I was very athletic and on all kinds of committees. By that time I had been there for three or four years and I was pretty clear about who my friends were, where the limits were, what things I could do and what things I couldn't do. And there weren't that many things that I couldn't do, with the exception of those real close interpersonal male, female things. And yet I found that I had several male friends in a different way than maybe the other girls had them; there were several guys who would come by and see me and talk to me.

Some of the offices that I ran for were clearly encouraged, were brought up to me, by teachers. Why don't you do this or why don't you run for this or why don't you get involved in this. The teachers were very supportive. I had a lot of good teachers. I can't remember having any negative experience from teachers with the exception of one geometry teacher who gave me an F. Which didn't have anything to do with racial stuff. I just wasn't a real good math student. Geometry and math have always been real hard for me. I was staying after and I was seeing him as often as I could after class and working. He still gave me an F. Home ec was going to prepare me for marriage or something and I didn't know what I was really going to do with it. I knew I was going to college. I just have an image of hearing my parents talk about it. My parents, neither of them has a college degree. There is really nobody in my immediate family, uncles and aunts, who have college degrees. Our parents both were civil servants, one worked for the army and one worked for the navy. My mother always worked as far as I can remember. As I look back, nobody really talked to me about not going into home economics, that there were other possibilities. And I was getting good grades and I was accepted at the state college. Nobody ever talked about anything other than home ec which was my idea. Nobody talked about scholarships. At that time so many women were trapped, period. Without even dealing with the racial thing, that was perfectly acceptable to be in home economics. It was certainly good preparation for the position that one expected a woman to be in. Most girls I think were going to be English majors or history. There wasn't a strong push for professional jobs even in the suburbs. There was the push for going to college but that was more in terms of your being able to be a good wife and being able to talk to your professional husband who was going to be a doctor or a lawyer or something else. There wasn't at that time a lot of discussion about women being professionals, other than teaching.

The community college, they tell you in high school, is a high school with ashtrays. I never had that experience, never had the feeling once I got here, I mean it was wonderful. It just opened me wide up. I had just excellent teachers and the freedom and going to plays, the productions that were on campus here. I was going to be a home ec teacher. And the first psychology class that I took was from a teacher who just awed me; I couldn't imagine that people actually studied stuff like that, and I was really turned on. I knew that I was going to major in psych. So I took all the psych classes that I could possibly take here, and then transferred to the state college and discovered their idea of psychology and my idea of psychology were quite different. While at the community college, I was working part time and I was working twenty-five hours a week and taking eighteen and a half units and doing some volunteer work on Saturday and it was great.

I remember how available the teachers were. They weren't tricky. If you were in class and if you studied and if you had problems,they were always available to talk to. I spent many hours in one teacher's office trying to go over the chemistry and the physics and the astronomy and he was always really helpful. I can't think of any teachers that I had that I didn't feel that I could go to their offices and talk to them. I never felt that it was in any way a waste of my time, or that I wasn't getting a good preparation to go on. In fact when I had gone on I realized that I did get a good strong preparation here. I had had my writing critically analyzed; it reminded me that I was no longer in high school, that I was in college. It really tightened me up. ...I am trying to think about how many women I saw as college professors. I don't remember very many.

When John Kennedy died, I remember what happened on campus on that day. Hearing about him being shot at home and coming on to school and walking into the lunchroom and the absolute quiet and absolute silence in that room and watching people pass by me in tears and upset and meeting my friends and leaving campus and we all went to a church and all talked about what that experience was like for us. I remember the beginning of some marches around campus, not against the campus but in protest to things that were going on in the country.

I had fantasized about going to a Black college in the south or going to one of the colleges in Atlanta, but it just wasn't financially feasible. I didn't push for it because I didn't feel like we could afford it. After having grown up in the suburbs there was some desire to find out how the other culture lived which was in fact my culture. I knew very very little about what it was like to live with Black people. I knew a whole lot at that time about what it was like to live in a white community, but I didn't know very much about being Black. There were about fifty Black students at the community college when I came here. I went to the state college because I felt that once I had gone through two years of junior college I really wanted to get out of town.

When I transferred to the state college, so many Black students were in sociology as opposed to psych that again I was isolated because I was a psych major. I didn't realize what I was getting into. That was pretty difficult to get there and discover that they didn't have the same understanding of psych that I had. And I felt like I was always behind because I was having trouble running rats through mazes. I still felt conspicuous among Black people. But I did date and I did know Black students. Really wasn't until I got into graduate school, it wasn't really until I was in my mid-twenties that I found a large group of people in this area and large organizations that I felt comfortable in.

After college graduation I remember being at home and being depressed because there wasn't anything. My parents after all this sacrifice had told me that once you got a degree, people would be beating down the doors to give you a job. People were telling me that I was either overqualified or underqualified. And I had been away from home and I didn't want to be home. I had lived independently for a couple of years. I didn't want to be back home and dependent on them. Even though I had worked all the way through that four years of school, I was still mostly financially dependent on them.And I was really feeling that I had just had it with school. I just didn't want to do that anymore. If this degree wasn't going to allow me to do what I wanted to, then there was no guarantee that the next one was going to allow me to do what I wanted to either.

So, I was just job hunting at home. And I came to the community college because I had some of my best academic years here. I came by to see people, to say hello and to see some old teachers, and somebody mentioned a person to me. They said, "Have you talked to him?" And I went down and I talked to him and he started talking to me about graduate school. I just didn't think I had the grades to get in. I didn't think that I had the motivation to get through. He started pressing and saying, "Well, if you were going to go, where would you go and if you were going to do this,...." and I was out of school in March and by June I was back in school, in counseling, because at the time he knew that the college would be looking for a Black female counselor. So it looked like there was at least the possibility of a job. That was in the late sixties, and there weren't very many Black professionals at that time coming through who could fill jobs.

Once I got to the university that first summer, it was like that first psychology class, it was wonderful, those classes were real exciting , the people were great. I was learning and not having any trouble. I just zoomed through in about two years and loved it. In the meanwhile, in that second year I got hired at this college.

The community college years and the master's degree years were the best. I was finally doing what I wanted to do. I was taking classes that meant something to me. The university was the real thing. Classes were small. You got to know all the students who were going through with you and there was a significant number of Black students in the program. There were only about seventy but fifteen or twenty of them were Black and they did have the same values system that I did and they did have the same goals. We worked together and studied together and got clients together. And I had a Black advisor which I had never had. If I could have gone for a doctorate at the university I probably would have.

I didn't get hired at first as a counselor. I got hired as a teacher. I had three classes, a basic psychology class and two Black psychology classes. Black psych had never been taught on this campus before and I certainly had never taught it before and I'd never taken Black psychology before, so we were all kind of starting at ground zero. I can remember that first year actually having anxiety attacks. My first year of graduate school I was teaching at the college from eight to ten in the morning, then drove to the university and was doing my first year of internship over there. That was from twelve to four, then I was in class from four to seven. I mean I drove about eighty miles a day and it meant that I changed roles at least four times a day from teacher to counselor to student to therapist. That was the most mind-boggling year that I ever experienced. I was tired all the time, but I was learning so much it was almost too much for me to make any sense. I mean it feels like there has always been stress from the time I first moved to the suburbs until now. Going into classrooms, preparing at home and going in and thinking something should last for an hour and it lasting for ten minutes and the room spinning around and going outside and having a cigarette and saying, "This is awful, this is terrible," but knowing I had to go back the next day, I had to go back. I tell people now that the only good thing about being a first-year teacher is that you never have to be a first-year teacher again.

I thought about the doctorate. Part of the reason, to be honest with you, is a very typical female reaction: it's not particularly easy for a man to relate to somebody who has a master's degree in counseling or background in psychology and then you add on a Ph.D., then the pickings are even slimmer at that point. I was feeling that I had spent a lot of time going to school and doing a lot of preparation for professional stuff and that in some way I had let the personal side of me go someplace and I didn't have time to go out. I was very active professionally, and feeling much better about my teaching. I was getting to be twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, and thinking, hey, if you don't settle in and start paying attention to your personal life, you know, then you may end up being single. Well, by the time I got to be thirty that seemed to be okay. That's when I started giving more serious consideration to going back for the doctorate. I still haven't given up the idea of the doctorate to this day. It still rummages around in there. The thing about a Ph.D. in counseling is that, given the community college, I'm not sure that it would prepare me to do any more than what I am already doing. I am considering now a doctorate in administration. I like this community college and I get paid very well to be here and I have three months off. I think I came to the decision that a Ph.D. in clinical psych was not going to buy me anything more in this job than what I already have.

I spent the first year doing the part-time teaching. I was hired as an instructor to teach classes three-fifths time and then the position of counselor came open. So I got hired the next year as a counselor. Now I am the division chair. Counseling work is threefold. We do personal counseling, academic counseling, and educational counseling. It's real exciting to talk to students about majors, and to help them find a major or talk through a program, or set up a program. But I wouldn't want to do that for the whole time that I was in my office. Career counseling is simply not my strong point. I also run groups , they are called counseling groups, not therapy groups, but what they are are therapy groups, where students get together once a week for an hour and a half and talk about whatever personal problems or situations they may need some help in. I like to do that. I find those groups tend to be primarily women which is not particularly uncommon not only in a school system but outside of the school system. During the day I have more women in that situation than I do men. The groups and the personal therapy get me away from the day-to-day "what does it take to transfer to the university" situation.

Then I teach. I usually teach one class a semester. It may be in the evening and it may be during the day. There have been very few semesters when I haven't taught something at least once a semester. I like the change, I like the change about the job, I like the fact that I can see somebody in personal counseling, I like seeing groups, I like being in front of the classroom. Most recently I've taught psych of women. I've taught Black psych, I've taught fundamental aspects of psych, I've taught social psychology of women. I lead a structured class, I demand a lot of work. I have a pretty strong reputation for what I do in a classroom.

At the beginning , because I was an inexperienced teacher and an inexperienced counselor and I was the youngest in the whole system, I took everything that I did really seriously. I don't feel quite that way anymore. I enjoy teaching much more. The same with counseling. I don't take so much on as my total responsibility. I try to tell students that we'll try to work through this process together. Some of it is my responsibility and I'll help. You need to check out this and to check out this and look at this and then come back and we'll talk about it. It is still your life and your decisions. I think that at the beginning I took on much more responsibility for students and felt like I was responsible for them. Trying to find that balance. And I tell them, "I will talk to you about the kinds of classes that you need to take, but I won't set up the schedule." Some of them just want you to do that, you know, and I won't do that. I don't think that facilitates independence on their part. It makes them dependent on me and I don't see that my responsibility is to make them dependent on me as a counselor. I think that it is my responsibility to make them not need me. My function is to become obsolete in a couple of semesters. We are seeing the eighteen-, nineteen-year-olds but we are also seeing more of the twenty-five to thirty-five or forty-year-old students and those students can't be in school full time. The eighteen-year-old who comes and goes for four semesters and takes a full load and leaves, we don't see that student very much anymore.

We had some Black students who had some difficulty coming into the counseling center. The structure in the center, there's that big desk and it's not a real friendly place to be in. One Black student came in and got into my office and had to bring a friend with her. I mean the system just intimidated her. I ended up having to talk to the department chair at the time and his impression was, "Hey, this is a wonderful, beautiful, lovely center, I mean, why would somebody not come in here to see you?" What I needed to do and what I did do, was go down and sit in the cafeteria for a while and then once I made some initial contacts with the students, say, "Now go up and make an appointment to see me."

The first year that I taught social psychology of women, at the end of that, a lot of stuff around roles and a lot of stuff around assertiveness, those women left that class really angry. And they began to make changes and their husband or kids or whatever hadn't been through that process with them. They go home and it is often very difficult for them to share it with somebody who is not also open and who maybe hasn't supported their going back to school. For a couple of years I was seeing a lot of women who were in their forties and fifties who were going through divorces after being married for 25 or 30 years. That was real tough.

The other half of my job is time doing division chair business. Signing papers. It is a lot of paper work. Requests for using a room in the counseling center. Minutes. We go over the minutes from the meetings, those have to be okayed. Those kinds of things. Then of course stuff comes in, requests from other division chairs and heads of counseling around the state. How many counselors do you have? What is your load? They want to know what are we doing and so there are requests for: what's the staff breakdown, what is the ethnic breakdown, what is the sex breakdown, salaries, that kind of information. We have what is called a college transfer day that we do in the fall and that's a big event for us.

There is a division-chair meeting with the president every other week. The president sits at one end of the table and the dean of instruction sits at the other end of the table and the rest of us sit and listen. It is a very structured meeting. It's very formal to me. I'm the only female full division chair. There is another woman who goes there because she is a dean. I chaired a scholarship committee, I've been on the affirmative action committee, I've been on the steering committee in the department. There have been other committees that I have been on on campus.

I still find myself being on guard for things in meetings. I think that language changes when I come in. I think it is a combination of not only being female but I think that there is the issue of being young, being Black. I mean it's often very hard for me to figure out which one of those things that they are responding to, if any. I have to be aware of the issues around minority people and around women. When I go into a meeting--whatever issue is being discussed--I have to filter it through "what does this mean to Black students?" Whenever I go into a meeting I feel like I carry in that responsibility because in most meetings I am the only minority person, and maybe the only woman. It is trying to filter through not only what it means to a campus at large, but trying to represent also women and minority students, because when I go back then to another meeting that is with women or when I am talking to other women or other Black faculty, then they see me as their representative. It is like I can't just go in and sit at a meeting. If somebody is going to speak up about how does this affect women, or is this fair to women, or fair to minority students, I feel like I have to represent that. It does feel like pressure because sometimes I'll go into those meetings and I'll try to think through, "Am I seeing everything?" There may not be somebody else there to bounce that off and sometimes I'll make a mistake and I'll go back and say, "I didn't think of that."

The concerns of the Black issues are not the same as the women's issues. When we are talking about women, we are talking about--in general-- white women. Sometimes they expect me to be able to speak to those kinds of issues and sometimes I can't do it. And sometimes I don't want to do it. Sometimes I just want to be there and be me and listen to what is going on and sit back and not be smart. You know, and just exist like some of the rest of the people around the table. But I can't, I don't feel like I can very easily do that. In terms of the young Black woman issue, I feel like I have to be a little bit more assertive in that place maybe than a male; I mean, I have noticed that the secretaries for instance will call the men Mr. or Dr. but they call me Cheryl.

I have to admit that counselors don't have--I don't know on other campuses--but counselors don't have a really strong reputation. We get a bad rep from any student who comes through and thinks that they haven't gotten good counseling. We don't bring in money into the system because we don't teach. The number of students that we see and counsel, we don't get paid for them in the same way that the rest of the campus does. I think that many teachers think that we don't do anything. I think it is hard to be a counselor. I don't think that we are seen in the same way, having the same status as a teacher does. Recently the campus voted for us to have extra hours. Nobody else's load got increased and our load got increased. The whole faculty approved that. We couldn't get them to see that if they get our load, that you're next--at least the potential is there. But we were vulnerable. And that to me was an indication that they didn't see us as faculty members. It was saying, "you're not the same as us." The counselors were really upset about that. People retreated and went to their offices. Said, "Here is my schedule, I am not doing anything else but this."

We had an article written in the paper once by a student who said that she had been to the counseling center and had gotten wrong information. Things change so quickly in counseling that it is very difficult to keep up on those changes and sometimes we make mistakes. But I think that we pay a very very heavy price for those mistakes in terms of status. And teasing, people who are fairly close to me, they come through and it is in a joking manner. But when there is that much joking around, you can't help but feel that there is stuff behind that. It's like, "You guys don't do anything over here all day. Every time I come through here you are just sitting," or something like that. Well, it's just, it's wearing. Counselors feel that they are not valued in the system for what they do do.

One thing that I was thinking about after the last two interviews was that I was sounding more like a crusader in some fashion as far as the Black issue was concerned and the women's issue was concerned, and that it felt like I was saying that I had evaluated every deed and every relationship somehow through those two perspectives. I feel that it is important to me to say that I think that some people don't like me just because I am me. You know I don't evaluate everybody and decide that they are either a racist or a sexist or an ageist or something. Those things are very important to me, but I try not to be fanatical about them.

There are a lot of really neat things that make it a lot of fun for me to be at the community college. I mean there are just endless things to do. I really enjoy that part of it, that opportunity to continually learn. I have a very good salary for a person who is my age, as well as a female Black person. I make a lot of bucks. I don't feel caught or trapped economically in some ways that I think many women feel. Like I can't leave because you know I can't afford to leave or whatever. My husband and I stay together because we like to be together, not because I would ever feel that I couldn't afford to split if it came to that. Tnat may sound negative, but it's a real nice secure feeling to feel. If I say I want to buy a house , I don't expect my credit or my name or my anything to be questioned. When we fill out those papers, and they see "division chair"— "Oh, you're a teacher" or "you're a counselor and a community college teacher." That's a different kind of acknowledgement than you actually get on campus itself. People will assume that if I say I am a teacher, they certainly want to make me an elementary school teacher; but when you're at a community college and then you're also in psychology and counseling, very often people are intimidated.

I think that we counselors do tend to be the scapegoats. There are places outside this college that I feel more appreciated than actually on campus. I don't like it. It feels unfair, feels like I have to work harder. It feels like it puts me back in a place of having to prove my competence. Angry, frustrated, but none of those feelings are heavy enough. It's like they are there, but the goodies that I get are good enough to outweigh those things. I'm not disillusioned or disenchanted . They are things to deal with but they are not things that wear me out or depress me or that I get gloomy about. They are like, you know, that's the pits , but it's like, well, now we have to go out and try to do something about it.

It is like the double duty kind of thing. For those of us who still do have the energy, to go out and make contact with the division chair of the math department, to have some input to these different places. We generally have to go out and do that. They don't come to us. They will listen to us. It feels like we are the watchdog on the campus. We are trying to look out for the students' interests as opposed to sometimes what is most expedient for the computer or whose turn it is to teach, as opposed to what the students need.

I think that one would have more influence the higher one gets in the system. That may not be true. The reality may be that once you get higher in the system you have less. But I think, in terms of decision-making, in terms of how money might be disseminated, what programs might be left in the system, and some awareness of the minority issues and women's issues at that level, it might be best taken care of by somebody like me. The next step, if I were going to do it, I would think that I would want to do it within the next couple of years. I've talked to someone about getting into the university administrative credentialing program. So I'm trying to figure out what it would mean with my family and husband. He said, "Do it."

What I am right now is a counselor-teacher. I'm not too sure that this is the most satisfaction that I can get. I am going back to the Black and female business. There are so few Blacks and/or females at that level that a couple of us need to go up there and find out what those folks are doing. And then if I decide that I don't want to do that ... But I may need to find that out for myself. I don't know how many faculty members there are at this college, but there are a bunch and there are only two Black females. And two Black female full-time folks is not a lot. There is one female Black administrator. I don't think that there's any question, that female Black administrator gets information that comes across her desk that she makes sure that I and other Black faculty members get. She notices things. I think that I have sensitized some of the other faculty members and some other women in my own staff to notice those things for themselves as well as for me. They'll sometimes now see things and then they'll check it off and send it to me, and I think that it is just because I am there physically that they remember to do that and I have made my interest obvious to them.

I guess I am having a hard time thinking I will be a counselor for forty years and didn't ever try anything else. One needs to challenge oneself and try other things and I would not like to say that I was the same thing for forty years. If I were going to be a counselor for the next forty years, if that's going to be it, then I also want to do a lot of gardening or I want to be a good cook or I want to be in class, I want something else. It feels like I want a constant challenge. I like to work the challenge to the point where I've gotten good at it before I move on. I don't just want to have stuff thrown at me all the time.

I heard my father say very recently that he felt that when I was growing up that whatever I made up my mind to do I would do, that he felt that I was a very strong-willed person and that he really admired that. He's not very verbal about what he feels, but I know more about what he feels when he introduces me to people and tells them what I do. Rather than telling me directly that he's proud of me or that he thinks that what I've done is neat, he's done it more by telling other people about me.

I mean he tells them that I work at a college and he tells them that I am the division chair. He tells them about our house. My mother came to this house before we moved in and walked around. Practically had tears in her eyes. It meant to her that her daughter was taking care of herself and being taken care of in a way that meant a great deal to her as a mother. I caught myself turning around and looking at her and her saying to my grandmother about how it does her heart good to see her daughter in a home like this.

You know, I was always very proud of my parents. My mother worked all the time that I was in school. I have very strong feelings about her and her ability to work and raise a family and I just assumed I could do that. I remember when I was first hired at the college. That was difficult for me because I had never taught before and was thinking about going in front of a classroom. I was able to tell her how afraid I was and how scared I was and she just said, you know, as she had always done years before, "You can do it, you can do it." You know, this was a place that I had been moving toward in some fashion and that I could do it. She's very proud of what I'm doing and yet there is a separation between us because our lives are quite different in many ways. She got married when she was nineteen. I got married when I was thirty-two. She had a year of college. I had six. She bought a house with her husband when she had a couple of kids, I bought my house before I was married. So there's a big contrast really in the way that we lived our lives in some ways and yet she's just always been super, very supportive.

My daughter is so new I don't really know what it is going to mean to me in terms of my work. I like to work, you know, I think that's important for me to do that. I already know that she pulls some things from me that have never been pulled from me before. Some new stuff that I hadn't really thought about before, and I'm sure that there will be years and years of that. Having a child gives me credibility in my classes; it gives me some sensitivity that I couldn't really have without the experience. I feel I have to keep going because right now I'm at a very respectable level, being the division chair, a college instructor. In fifteen years I still want to be doing some other interesting things for her to model. I don't want to just stop here.

Profile

DANIEL RAMIREZ

(Daniel Ramirez teaches history in a California community college. He is in his forties. He was interviewed in his office in the summer of 1981.)

I came from the central valley of California. I lived in a series of small agricultural towns. In the area I came from the towns were seventy or eighty percent Mexican. We always identified ourselves as Mexican as opposed to American. The mentality there was us versus them, "Mexicanos" and "Americanos" in the Spanish language, that being the language which I learned to speak first. I was brought up by my grandmother, lived with her for ten years. My five sisters--I was the oldest in the family-- they lived with my parents. My father was a carpenter. We're not talking about a person who made a lot of money in his craft, but he had a lot of respect within the Mexican community. He was known as "maestro" which means "master" in Spanish. At age nine or ten I moved to my family.

I grew up thinking that most of the people in the United States were Mexican and most people spoke Spanish, and most people ate tortillas and beans, and most people were probably farm workers, and certainly most people were Catholics. All the priests were Irish. That's where the us-them mentality began to break down, because we knew that those white people were a little bit like us. Religion played a strong role in my life. My grandmother would take me to church. I was there every morning and I was there three times on Saturday and Sunday. I grew up thinking I might be a priest. The idea of becoming a priest wasn't a bad one. A lot of my education was received in the catechism.

Everything went fairly well in my life until I was about twelve or thirteen. Then I began to think about religion in a serious kind of way. That was the worst period of my life. I started to think about very abstract questions, like the question of endless time, endless space. I'd think about heaven and hell. The upshot was I had a breakdown when I was thirteen. I'd sit around and count my sins. The priest started talking to my grandmother. She didn't know how to deal with this, and the priest didn't know how to deal with it. Finally a psychologist was brought in, and for six months I was between the devil and the deep blue sea. I was really in bad shape till one day finally I determined that I'm a human being and I'm going to have to live like a human being, live the way other people do.

I learned that there are times when you have to give up. The problem was so great that you can't solve it, you have to resign yourself to a certain situation. It was a very tough period in my life and I figured if I survived that, I can survive just about anything. I would have committed suicide but that was the biggest sin of all in the Catholic Church, because anything would have been preferable to that hell I was going through. But I did survive.

In school I thought I was doing all right, but as I look at my report cards, every year I was on the verge of being held back. As I got older, I did better. By the time I was in high school I graduated in the top five, and then in college every one of my undergraduate semesters I got 3.5 or above, at a time when it was very competitive. As I mastered the language I found that the grades came easy. Junior high school was an eye-opener because there were a lot of people from Texas and Oklahoma there. There was the red-neck mentality that I'd never encountered before, a lot of oil workers who didn't like Blacks and they didn't care much for Mexicans. The town did have a positive attitude towards education. People spent a lot of money on education.

There were bad things that happened to Chicanos there, but I was somewhat immune because I was a top student by the time I was in high school and that sheltered me to some extent. I can't say that I ever had any bad experiences with teachers. I can't say that I ever ran into a teacher that didn't like me. I was a quiet person and I'd do my work and I wouldn't make any trouble. By this time I was regularly working out in the fields, chopping cotton,and I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do but I knew that I didn't want to chop cotton the rest of my life. I was also helping my father as a carpenter on weekends. One semester in my high school years my father had to go to work at another location to build a house, and I went with him. Grapes were the big industry there, not cotton. I was put in a series of classes and I kept getting 97's, 98's, 99's on my tests and in one class, in biology, I kept getting B's. Finally a Mexican guy went to the teacher and said, "How come he is getting a B?" He said, "Oh, that's because this isn't college prep. You can't get A's if you're not in college prep." And that's the first I'd ever heard of college prep. The counselor had simply assumed: here's another Mexican coming in for the grape harvest and this kid's not going to go to college. I was never questioned as to what I wanted to take or what my interests were. Most of the Mexicans saw school as a prison. They hated to go there. We were punished for speaking Spanish on the school grounds, we were held after class or given detention.

Everybody hung around in cliques in high school. I just hung around by myself. I was a pretty good athlete. But I never went out for the school teams though the coaches asked me to several times. Economically and scholastically, I knew that it didn't make any sense to go out for athletics. In class the teachers would hand back the papers in rank order, the highest grade first. Everybody knew it was good to get the first paper, it was not good to get the last paper. In most of my classes I got the first paper. I was the only Mexican that did that, and so I got a lot of support from the other Mexicans because I could compete with the whites. I didn't really appreciate that until later. I always shared the inferiority complex that Mexicans had, that we weren't as good as those whites. It was in junior college that I realized that I could compete. In fact I was the competition that other people were trying to beat academically.

When I graduated from high school, the teachers voted me the biggest trophy. It was called the faculty cup. I was also the first Mexican that got it. On the eve of getting this award the principal went to the room I was in, and he asked to see me. He said, "I'd like to congratulate you. You're the first one of your race that's ever won this award we're going to give." I was quite surprised when I did get the award. Other people were surprised too because outside of my own class, very few people knew who I was. I was simply another Mexican. In the freshman year fifty percent of the student body was Mexican. By the senior year when I graduated, of one hundred and six people, three of us were Mexican. We were all boys.

I received awards at the end of high school, not much money, two hundred bucks or something. But enough to make my parents see that something good might happen to me. I was recruited from high school, and the junior college experience was very good. It was a small junior college nearby. After every semester they would post everybody's grade point average in the central quad . I was glad to see that I was the top person. I got straight A's. My confidence was increasing, I thought I wanted to go into academics.

But then at the end of the freshman year my plans almost went down the tubes. Because that summer, as in previous summers, I had to go to the coast, as we called it. When Mexicans say "go to the coast", that means you go pick orchard crops in San Jose or Ukiah or wherever. My father actually sent me off so I wouldn't enroll in college again. He said, "You know, it's been fun, but there's a lot of kids to support and you should really go to work and help me." I remember I cried and cried one particular day. My mother said, "Quit sobbing--I never did want you to go to college anyway. I told your father not to let you go." She kept saying this, but it was obvious to me that she didn't mean it. Finally she said, "Look, maybe you'll feel better if we let you go down for a couple of days and visit your girlfriend." So I went down to the Greyhound station and the teller told me, "What do you want?" and I said, "I want to buy a ticket." She said, "One way or round trip?" My mother was with me, and I said, "One way," and my mother tapped me on the shoulder and she said, "You mean round trip, don't you?" And I turned to her and I said, "No, ma, I mean one way." And she said, "All right." And right there I knew that she was really on my side. She simply didn't want to go against my father because in the Mexican family the father has the ultimate say. So I went and this was the day of registration for college. When I went to face my father, as was his custom, he simply pretended that nothing had happened, and we didn't have a discussion. From a Mexican point of view, I abandoned my family. I was the oldest, I was the only boy at that time. Six women in the family, he had it hard. But from the middle class American point of view, the attitude is nobody can tell you what to do, dictate the rest of your life. I bought that idea, that I have a right to make as much as I can of myself. I still feel a little bit of guilt occasionally over that. But had I not done it, I'd still be in the small town.

History was always my first love from the very beginning. But I was convinced that I had artistic talent and everybody kept telling me, you're an artist, you're an artist. I didn't enjoy it that much, but I felt that I could make a living from it. It wasn't until I got to the state college that I made the switch from art to history. I won a scholarship and transferred to a four-year college. But I learned I couldn't finance my way through. I'd have to go on loans. This was hard to accept, but after working at a grocery store for many hours, I realized that school looks really good even if you go into debt. Right from the beginning I really liked the place. I came into contact with people that were very different than any that I'd ever experienced before, people that had a lot of money.

Here I'm going to school with people whose parents are bankers, corporation owners, people that would go to Hawaii for Christmas, people who would go to Europe in the summer routinely. This was a real eye-opener to me. I had a girlfriend. Her father owned a bank. We would argue. I finally alienated her one day when I said, "Well, your philosophy is that people should work for what they get, people should merit what they get, they should deserve what they get. And you go to Hawaii or you go around the world in the summer. What have you done to merit all of this? You've never worked a day in your life, not even babysitting." She did begin to appreciate my philosophy, but I don't think she liked it that much.

I was working and I was on scholarship and I was on loans, and when I was going to college I gave my parents money. I'd go back in the summer and whatever I'd made, I'd give them. Working out in the fields, I always wondered, God, how come we're working out here in August and getting up at three o'clock in the morning and it's four o'clock and it's still 104. And my sisters and I are working like dogs out here and we're making eighty-five cents an hour. How come we're doing this? People would faint occasionally or get stung by bees. And at one o'clock, when you had to eat, you could hardly see yourself getting back and chopping the cotton. So my socialist tendencies grew out of that experience. And when I went to junior college I met an instructor who introduced me to socialism as an intellectual pursuit. He was one of the top teachers I've had. So my studies have been the history of socialism. I've never been an advocate, however, I'm not a cause person.

I graduated and I applied to graduate school and got a scholarship. The state university gave me money. It was a good scholarship. There was a very clear hierarchy at the state university in terms of history. I was in Latin American history initially. I was turned off Latin American history because our teachers asked only two questions: "What's wrong with Latin America?" and "What can we do to improve our foreign policy in Latin America?" We don't do that with Europe or with other areas. Finally the thing that determined that I would switch was this hierarchy. I thought I'd rather be with the top group. People would practically sneer at you. So I shifted to European history. And I met a couple of instructors that were absolutely great instructors. I was interested in modern history so that eliminated a lot of areas, Renaissance and so forth. I was interested in the Catholic Latin culture. The process of elimination came down to Spain. I made that decision, and it was a great decision. I got a chance to live abroad two years doing research. I was interested in Spanish socialism and that's what I've researched. The book that I wrote I was really interested in. Every moment that I spent on it I was glad, I was happy.

I never talked to my family about school. I went home every summer and I think my sisters vaguely knew that I was in history. I don't think my parents really knew what my major was. My mother had a third-grade education. My father had a fifth-grade education. My sisters had a positive feeling about what I was doing. My father had a positive feeling, although I don't think he liked to admit it. When I would go home all of his friends would say, "He really talks a lot about you, says you're doing great," but he would never tell me anything like that. I was known as "professor" around town. All Mexicans have nicknames. I was the professor because I had gone to college.

Once when I was going to the university I didn't have a means of transportation and I absolutely had to be there for classes the next day . My father got up at two o'clock and he proceeded to drive me all the way. It was a four-and-a-half-hour drive, and he was dying of sleep. But he drove me there, and I asked him to "come in, pa, and go to sleep." No, he had to drive back and go to work. I remember those things.

The most exciting part of graduate school was being a teaching assistant. I didn't think I'd like teaching. I went into it thinking about research. I'll teach because that's part of the job, you've got to learn to do that in order to get to the good part. I was surprised that I could get up before thirty people and have something to say. In the environment I came from being vocal is very unimportant. Keeping your mouth shut, the strong silent type, was ideal.

At the university it was assumed that you wanted to teach college. They didn't assume that you wanted to go out and do anything else. They didn't assume that you'd want to go out and teach at a junior college. We never talked about it, but I'm sure there would have been a strong prejudice against that. It was "go out and get a job at a college." It had been a feasible goal; if you got your Ph.D. you had a reasonably good chance of going out and getting a college job.

When I got out in '71 I would have liked to go to a four-year school. I wrote a lot of letters. It was very hard in '71, and I wrote over one hundred letters. I received job offers from three junior colleges. I also got an interview at a university. Evidently the chancellor said, "Listen, all things being equal, if you get a minority, give him a break." But these historians wanted to establish their independence. Plus, they had a man there who was on a one-year sabbatical replacement whom they all favored. I got a very bad reception. They almost didn't want to even talk to me. And they proceeded to give me a Ph.D. examination. I was amazed. I noted a lot of hostility and I just didn't know why. The chairman seemed to favor me, but he was the only one. I know that being of Mexican background helped me get this job at the community college, though I think it was also who I knew. You can talk about affirmative action, or the most qualified, but the old buddy system is still there when all is said and done.

When I first came here, I thought it was just a stepping stone. I'd been trained to do research . Nobody talked about preparing you to teach at a junior college. But the job market started to decline. I thought, well, if things are starting to go downhill, maybe with the affirmative action program I'm probably still in better shape than most people are. It didn't turn out that way. The first offer was a couple of years after I started here. A private college contacted me. In this case I was in the driver's seat. They had good students. It looked like a college campus, the ideal. I don't think they leveled with me totally on the fact that they were trying to get minorities, they down-played that part. But I suspected that I would be the first to be fired if they had financial problems. So in the back of my mind was that if I got this job, I was leaving the security of the junior college where the future looked fairly bright for a small college where the economic future didn't look all that bright. So I turned it down. A couple of years later a professor I'd admired at my college wrote me a letter saying they were looking for a person at the university he'd moved to. It was half-time in the history department. They were looking for a person that had administrative abilities to work with minorities. I got a little bit excited about it but not all that much. A series of letters were exchanged with a lot of different people and then they had some problems of their own. I kept thinking I don't really want to be an administrator. And so it fell through.

When I first came here I taught Western Civilization, European History; I also taught a couple of courses in Mexican-American History. I like ethnic studies. I've learned that every group of people has a history that's equally valid. I find that in this particular class I'm able to use a lot of my own experiences as illustrations. I started to branch out to American History about five years ago, the History of the American West, Trans-Mississippi West. The bulk of my reading is in American history at this stage of my career. I've come around to something I never thought would ever happen--to be interested in all kinds of history. I'm fortunate in that I'm one of the few people in the department who are still able to teach all their classes in one discipline. I see myself as a historian. Historian is the right word. Not just a history teacher because I've published. I think that's the distinction between being a teacher of history and a historian, and I've always wanted to be a historian.

I always liked learning new things. I'm attracted by ideas and by books, so I always wanted to be a student. I couldn't believe that someone would pay you to learn the rest of your life. I was also attracted by the idea that a teacher had some prestige in the community. As I was growing up in the fifties and sixties I think there's very little doubt that a teacher was a figure that had some status in the community. Certainly teachers had status in my eyes, and I wanted to be like them. Teaching was also a way of achieving social economic mobility; being a teacher was a way for a person that didn't have very much status to rise.

When I got the offers at the junior colleges I wasn't all that enthralled because I knew that they didn't really care what kind of research you did, nor did most junior colleges do anything to encourage your research. They were interested almost totally in the teaching aspect. So the teaching has become important once I left the university, once I got here, and I'm very conscientious in terms of work. I concentrated on teaching because that was my responsibility, because that was what the job entailed. And I've become a good teacher. I'm not the best, and I'm not the worst either. I feel a responsibility to teaching; I've cultivated the craft.

At the university, even though the emphasis was not on teaching, I had some great teachers. The best teachers were the best researchers. Most people don't realize that. They think it's either-or. Once I got to the junior college I decided maybe I can fall into that same category. I always go in prepared. The lecture is always well organized, and in all my years of teaching here I've always given back papers that are received at the next class meeting. I expect a lot from the students. I have to teach by example. So I've been very conscientious. It's gotten to the point where I actually like teaching. At first I was kind of afraid of it and I certainly was not enthusiastic about it, but as time has gone by I like getting in front of thirty people now.

I always make extensive notations on the blue books. I've never in my life given an objective exam, true and false, or short answer or whatever because at a junior college you're trying to teach people things beyond subject matter, you're trying to teach them responsibility , you're trying to teach them to communicate in written form and also verbally. It's possible to not know your students and not know anything that they've done if you do true or false types of exams two or three times a semester. I like to see what people have done, what they're capable of doing. I like to see if my past evaluation of them was correct or not. The strength of my approach is that people, when they come out of my course, they feel they did indeed learn about the subject matter.

I was the first one in history to get a Ph.D. And people would make jokes about Ph.D.'s which displayed a kind of envy or hostility. But they were very rare, two or three times a year. In my own discipline, in history, half of my colleagues came to junior college from local high schools and they considered it a big break to come to the junior college. And the other half were people like me, people that went to the university, who thought they were going to do university work, and who more or less stepped down to the junior college. We assume we are professional and we're going to teach the way we've been taught to teach. I could be misreading it. This isn't the kind of conversation I have with my colleagues in history. When I first came here, I gave seven F's the first semester I was here, and I had three or four people come up to me and say, "We don't give F's at this school. What do you think you're doing, this is a junior college, we don't give F's, are you trying to hurt the students or what?" As time goes by I've become less uptight in terms of standards.

I make friends with some of the students. A lot of our students are older here. Some of these people are doctors, their wives, corporation owners. So we're not simply talking about an 18-year-old kid, although I've made a good number of friends with people that were quite young. I find that as time goes by I'm more and more beginning to be perceived as a father image. Some of the students seek me out, come to my office, because I remind them of an uncle that they had back in New Jersey. I fulfill a function in their lives more than simply teaching them history, and it's a role I , after thinking about it, I kind of like. I tend to cultivate a friendship with people that perform well in my classes . One student wound up taking three or four courses from me, he always performed well. I wrote letters of recommendation for him, got him into the university and at the university he blossomed. He graduated, he'd become a history major, he knew all the big names, he'd taken all these courses, he'd done what I counselled him to do. Another individual was an Italian kid from Connecticut who maintained that I looked a lot like one of his relatives. He too went on to a university. Almost all the kids that I maintained this kind of relationship with are people that would go on to universities, people that I guess want to emulate what I've done to some extent.

I try to maintain an interest in research. But now it's downright difficult to go home and work on an article or whatever. It's not my most important priority. I'd rather go home and read a textbook so I can prepare a lecture. But I still think it's important to maintain an interest in research and even in publishing if possible, though I think those are two different categories.

Half of the students are really interested in history. They want to know who the great historians were, who Edward Gibbon was and what historians have said about Gibbon. The other half don't want to pursue it that far, but the more I research the more I'm able to satisfy their curiosity. Historiography is simply more than history; I think they do in fact see me as a historian. They make a distinction between having a Ph.D. and not. I think they're all aware of that, who has Ph.D's and who doesn't; and sometimes for the wrong reasons they think it's important that you have a Ph.D. Most students, all things considered, would rather take a class from somebody that was very knowledgeable about the field rather than somebody who has a passing interest in that field.

With students to have a Ph.D. is really helpful to me to maintain credibility, which I find I have to do being Mexican. I think there are a lot of people that assume that anybody with a Latin last name or any Black instructor got the job because of affirmative action. They don't really belong here, they got a break, and maybe they're not as competent as other people. So having a Ph.D. breaks down the kind of resistance that you might encounter. I know that there are a lot of students here that have never had a Black teacher or a Mexican teacher so there's a certain responsibility that goes along with it. Many of them will get a positive or negative attitude of Mexicans because of the way that I come across in the classroom possibly, seeing how a lot of these kids have never seen a Mexican. So I want to project a professional image and I want them to know that I have a Ph.D.

My colleagues have an ambivalent attitude about the Ph.D. Most of them started Ph.D. programs and for some reason they had to drop out. They're here and they realize they're going to be here, they're not going to go back to graduate school and get that Ph.D. I appreciate something I couldn't ten years ago: as in most professions, after your mid-thirties you realize that whatever you're doing now is probably what you're going to be doing for the rest of your working life. I'm beginning to feel maybe a little bit that way. I'm beginning to feel that maybe I really ought to get that book out and published because nobody cares what you did ten years ago or even five years ago, they want to know what you're doing now. I don't think that simply teaching in the classroom and being conscientious is enough. I wouldn't be satisfied just being a history teacher. Therefore I think that research at the very least is important. You have to get out and go to professional meetings and go to seminars and talk and get involved in intellectual discussions and do things that are difficult in this environment now.

In the past few years the most important things that have happened to me were the two summer seminars I went to. In the first one I was the youngest member of the seminar. I was the only junior college member. Everybody else taught at a four-year school. The seminar lasted two months and I came back and incorporated a lot of that stuff into my classes. What I'm proposing to do on my sabbatical stems directly from that experience. It really recharges my battery and I started to remember what universities were like again. I think I had almost forgotten.

Some teachers like to work with real down-and-out types of students. They came into teaching because they wanted to help people. The subject matter is secondary. I never came anywhere near that perspective which I think is a good perspective, especially for this level. I find that in all my years of teaching I feel possibly more positive now than any time in the past. Instead of getting burned out or feeling that I made the wrong career choice, the more time goes by the better I feel about this particular line of work. I see it as a profession, and it's permitted me to do a lot of things that I think are important. My priorities include being involved with ideas and being a student for the rest of my life . To be good at it you have to continually read. Teaching has permitted me to learn more and more, to become more knowledgeable. It's also permitted a great deal of leisure . We have three months and we have a big holiday for Christmas, for Easter, and the leisure I enjoy. I've taken advantage of the time for the most part to travel. Even initially I had some pretty positive feelings because I had been to junior college, unlike a lot of teachers here who never went to junior college, didn't know anything about a junior college, and didn't know anybody that went to a junior college. Many of them I think felt that this was a step down. My wife initially felt something like this; she'd never been to junior college nor did she know anybody that attended one. But my attitude was always different than hers because I'd been through this kind of a system and I'd remembered that some of my better teachers were junior college instructors. So the feelings were not at all negative. But I was ambitious. I wanted to go to a university.

When I took part in these two seminars that I've alluded to with twenty-four individuals from different academic backgrounds, it became evident to me that the junior college, especially the one that I was at, had a lot to offer. Talking to some of my colleagues that went to colleges, you also learn that many of them are bogged down with committees, with publish or perish. That university setting doesn't look nearly as attractive as it did ten or fifteen years ago. On the other hand, the junior college looks pretty good to me. The security here is, I suppose, a very big thing.

Some of the colleagues that I socialize with may know about my work; but even within the history group, most people don't know that I've published anything. Some of my other colleagues have published and I'm aware of what they've done. I've gone out and bought their books and I've read them, but we hardly ever have occasion to talk about subject matter in that way. I read my colleagues' books because I think it's professional courtesy. It's something--if you're working with somebody--you should know what they're doing and become knowledgeable about it. A few years ago there was a display of faculty publications that was quite nice. There were fifteen or twenty books there, but there's no tremendous emphasis in that regard. You're not encouraged to do it, it's not expected, it's not part of your job. Also the economic situation has forced a lot of people to moonlight. Most of my colleagues, they say, we're not monks, we didn't come here because we want to lead an austere life and devote ourselves to whatever, and I can understand that viewpoint. We're not monks. But, given the background I come from, I hardly see this as a monastic life. A junior college like this one--and this one's better than most--I really think does not stimulate the faculty intellectually. There's very little encouragement. At the same time I don't feel that it discourages it. The opportunities are available if one is willing to pursue them. I think the initiative has to come from individuals.I don't complain about it because I think it's the individual. If you really want to do it, I suppose you'll do it.

I mentioned to you before that from one point of view this is almost a vocational school because maybe eighty percent of the students do not transfer to four-year schools. I think that the emphasis should be on teaching. If you want a democratic educational system then the one we have is pretty good I think. I've been in Europe and I know the pitfalls of other systems. Most of the university students are already convinced that knowledge is power. But at a junior college there's a lot of students that come here because their parents said come here. It's unfortunate to teach a history course where about half of the students are in that category. I pride myself on being realistic, I try not to be too cynical. They come into your classroom but you've got to see it as an opportunity to acquaint them with certain ideas even though they're resisting them. That's a real challenge, you know, to do that, even that little bit.

Times have changed too. We often forget that students are different now than they were fifteen years ago. Even if I went back to the university I think there would be a difference. They're not going to necessarily want to put in seventy hours a week of studying. Maybe they didn't want to fifteen years ago but they did it. There's also a generation gap. This is kind of a market place. I know that if I'm going to assign seven books a semester instead of three that there will be a good number of students that'll say, "Hey, wait a minute, this other teacher is teaching the same class, he's only got three books." Now they're not going to ask, is he trying to acquaint me with new ideas or what is the value of this book. They don't want to go beyond the stage of there's seven books versus three books, and if I assign those seven books I'm gonna have half the number of students. I think that's sad, you know, because that wasn't the case at the university where most people actually appreciated the efforts of the instructor to deal with ideas. It's sad, but you have to deal with it. I can't afford to wind up with under twenty students. The administrators always talk about intellectual integrity, integrity in the course and all that. They never tell us, "It's a matter of bodies, keep them in." But I know they don't like to see declining enrollment, and most teachers are confused because they're getting both of these messages. Of course integrity is important. At the same time we've got to do something to maintain the student numbers.

Ten percent of our faculty is Black or Mexican. There are a few Asians. I was made advisor to the Mexican American Club years ago when students were fairly militant, especially Chicano students. I was asked to give a speech and be candid. I went up and gave a speech and said, "You know, I'm here to teach students primarily, not necessarily Mexican students." So my orientation was significantly different. Yet the students there were very positive about my orientation. A couple of my colleagues that were there, on the other hand, felt that I was selling out. "How can you say something like that?" was the way they put it, and one of them is always spurring me on, saying, "You know, you need to make more of a commitment in terms of your race." In the seventies we were often asked, what have you done for your race today? He still maintains that orientation a little bit. I never really maintained it, in part because of my training. It was an academic training, a training in history. It's hard to mouth easy slogans if for ten years you've had this kind of academic training. At the same time I see myself as adhering to the Chicano movement. I agree with most of the aims of the Chicano movement. At first I had difficulties because in the area I came from, "Chicano" was a bad word. "Mexican-American" was the right word. I've come to accept "Chicano." At the beginning I was considered more conservative. Now I think by most of my students I'm considered more radical. Nobody wants to hear about affirmative action or prejudice or discrimination or the fact that we don't have enough Mexicans or that the university only has two percent Chicano students. That kind of information is not that desirable today, especially by people that are not Chicano. I still give that kind of information. My ideas on race and on other things haven't changed significantly since I was in high school; sometimes they're popular and sometimes they're not.

Being Mexican was, through most of my life, probably a detriment. At this level it is a positive thing, because that's what differentiates me from other teachers in the minds of many students, that I come from a Mexican background, also a lower class background. I've learned that the background has been positive in terms of teaching , that I can get their interest, whereas I might not be able to if I mirrored their background. At the same time I try not to overdo it, try to maintain a sense of balance, because I think that's being professional. I don't believe in using the classroom to get people to march for a lettuce strike or this or that. My colleague's position which I can appreciate is that school is not an ivory tower, that it's part of society. I mentioned that even in high school I was a loner. I didn't hang around with the groups, I did not take a position that was popular with other people, and so I don't feel badly.

I am aware of race. I didn't marry a Mexican. My kids are not totally Mexican. I'm aware of all of that. In my own personal life many of the faculty members see me as a representative of Mexican Americans and many of them erroneously believe (and I've stopped trying to convince them that I'm not all that typical) that what I think about Cesar Chavez, or whatever, is what all Mexicans think. The group of people that I come from is very diverse in terms of backgrounds, and certainly few Mexicans are in the same situation that I'm in right now. I also try to make students aware of their stereotypes: the Mexican is illiterate, a drop-out from education, a low rider, and speaks in a funny dialogue. And so I perform a positive service just by being here. People come up to me and say, "You're Italian, aren't you?", or "You're Portuguese." They assume I'm not Mexican "because you're not at all like a low rider," and after awhile I think it occurs to many people that the majority of Mexican people are not low riders, that indeed if I'm not typically Mexican, I'm not all that atypical either. I think people like me do play a positive role at this level simply by being here.

Profile

ROBERT THATCHER

(Robert Thatcher is in his forties and teaches physics in a California community college. We interviewed him for all three interviews in his office at the college during the summer of 1981.)

There were five of us in the family, three boys, two girls. I was the fourth. We were about a year and a half apart. My father worked in an automobile plant. He was a person who detested being in a situation where people weren't doing anything. He stayed away from the projects, government subsidized or supported housing. He felt that an idle mind was the devil's workshop. When we came in from school if we didn't have anything to do he always kept a batch of ground to dig in. He would say, "Go out and dig up the garden." We just didn't sit around. On weekends or during the summer vacations we didn't sleep in. Everybody got up when he got up and he never did sleep in. Eight o'clock everybody was up. Well, what are we going to do when we get up? Stand up, stand around, go out and dig up the garden. He told us, "When you graduate from high school you can stay here, but you're going to work. You're not going to stay here free and you will go to church on Sunday. You can stay out all night. Sunday morning you will be in church and you're not going to sleep in church."

I think my mother had greater impact in terms of us growing up. She didn't work , oh, up until we were in junior high school. She was home, which I think was very important. The family stayed together, sat down to eat together. We all sat down and had dinner or breakfast or whatever; it was strictly a family setting and my father maintained a very strong hand in the family. He controlled the money. He controlled the decisions, the whole bit, but in a lot of cases my mother had a better knack for making decisions and sometimes it would take a good argument before he would finally admit to what she was suggesting. She was not a party-goer or drinker or smoker. Very religious but not fanatical, tried to be very broad-minded, but very firm, didn't take any talking back. If she said do something, you did it. She was a strong believer in discipline. If she told us to come back at a certain time, we did come back. The oldest boy was responsible for the others. I guess he played kind of the role of the babysitter when she was gone because he was in charge. He disciplined us if need be.

Most of my life I've lived in an integrated city. We had to just about fight our way to school, fight our way back. Living in the city you had the gangs that would have certain territories, based on streets. I think the Black and white kids got along pretty well together. I didn't sense having any problems in the school other than an occasional fight but that could be with either a Black or a white student. But I think the key thing was we had teachers who really believed in the three R's . I learned how to read very early, I did arithmetic very early. When we came home we had to bring books home. I mean, you didn't come home without a book.I think the thing that helped us through was the fact that by us being good kids, the white teachers took more time with us. We were good students, we were in class all the time, we were fed when we came to school. We just weren't problem kids and we sort of blended in with the white students.

In junior high school and high school I never was absent the whole time. When I went to junior high school I got into the tracking program. I would look forward to getting into a shop class. First time where you could really make something and have the necessary tools to make whatever you wanted to make. I was always mechanically inclined, putting bicycles together , fixing things, so a shop for me was sort of a natural. I didn't look at it as being tracked because it was something I did enjoy. The notion of racism wasn't there. You didn't have the idea that Blacks were being placed in certain places. Older people might have known but it really wasn't something you talked about. All your buddics are taking shop and in some cases counselors are suggesting this is a good class to take. You really didn't look at it in terms of sort of a deliberate effort. One reason I had so much success in shop was because I knew how to read, I knew how to do my arithmetic, and so when we had to measure things, had to draw things, that really wasn't difficult for me. I took mechanical drawing, drafting, for the first time in junior high school. Very good in that, and again, a lot of encouragement from teachers. Never a discipline problem because I knew what was waiting for me at home.

In high school I discovered that especially in chemistry a lot of Black students had trouble and I was the only Black chemistry person that just zipped right through. So they began to look at me as a little brain and that was something that kinda made my head swell a little bit. In the high school, again, the shop program. I took my first science class in eleventh grade. It was a general science class. I took chemistry as a senior and I think I had an A in chemistry. I think that the important thing, though, some of the people that were in those classes were college prep people and I sensed that I was able to compete with them and I began to feel that maybe I wasn't so dumb after all, maybe I could handle some of the college work, and that's what sort of got things started. But in general, most of my schooling involved shop courses--wood shop, metal shop, crafts. I was very good at those. Probably had I felt that job opportunities were there, I might have gone into one of those areas. But at that time you were talking about getting a job in the private sector, and those jobs were not readily available, crafts jobs in the private sector for Blacks. So even though I was a good cabinet maker, even though I was good in radio shop, there were no images out there with us working in those areas and so I had to look at something where I saw Blacks working. The teaching profession was one of the few areas where Blacks were, and most of us were in the elementary schools or teaching the mentally-retarded classes.

I think probably I was kind of the clown in my classes when I went to high school. It was the only high school in the city, so you had a much higher composition of white students and you've got Blacks in white classes and I was still a good student, but I was kind of the clown. But never to the point where I would be sent out of the class or sent to the dean or anything like that. I knew how far I could go. In English I remember reading a story about how in every group there's always a clown and I can remember very vividly the class turning around and looking at me and saying, "He's the clown in our class." I think that was the first time I really got serious about school even though I was not then in a college prep program.

I really became more aware of racism when I went to college. In high school I guess I thought I was just a student. In some of the shop classes I gravitated towards the more productive students that were more into school. When I went into the college prep program in my senior year you're looking at basically white students. At that time there were very few Blacks in professional jobs that we saw. So you either had to go to work for the auto plant or dig ditches or something like that unless you had some skills. The notion of getting a college degree was embedded in my mind. I was told that the classes would be "too difficult," they would require "too much studying," and I "wouldn't be able to handle" those classes. I had a counselor I can remember vividly. I went in and he saw the algebra, the French and the chemistry and he said, "There's no way you're going to pass those courses. You just don't have the background." But I still insisted on taking the courses and he said, "Well, O.K., but you know you're going to have problems." He tried to discourage me. He didn't prevent me from taking them but he really talked to me very strongly not to take the courses. It was kind of typical; there were some Blacks in college prep classes but not a large number.

But I saw people that I'd taken classes with in the college prep programs. There was a white student; he and I were good buddies and we took math classes in junior high school together and I always got a better grade than he did. In high school he and I had classes together and I'm feeling that I'm just as good academically as he is. And so I think, when you get other students that are taking those courses, to me that's much more of a driving force than what the counselor is saying. Any time you move into a college prep class you feel you're the bottom. If you're Black, you're going to always have the worst paper in the class; it's only after the first few exams that you discover that you're not the worst in the class.

My parents had already told me I wasn't going to stay home unless I did something, so college was the alternative. My father didn't really have a lot of high aspirations for college. At that time, my mother was doing day work cleaning houses for professors. They would always ask about the kids. She was always coming home talking about the professors, about school, and on several occasions I did go over and help her and the people would talk to me: "What are you going to do? What are you taking in college?" They would suggest, have you thought about being this or have you thought about being that. No--but maybe that's what I ought to start saying.

I think my first year in college was a kind of a discovery period. It was a top community college in the area. They demanded quite a bit from you. I took an exam, an aptitude test. As a consequence of the test they said I didn't even belong in college, that I had probably no chance of succeeding at the junior college. That really didn't discourage me because when I took the test, I looked at what I didn't do or didn't know more in terms of not having been exposed to that, rather than not being able to do that. This counselor, she talked very strongly against my even going to college. She suggested that maybe I should consider going to trade school. But again my rationalization was that I didn't have the background. I mean you ask me to do something in three dimensions. Now what the hell is three dimensions? You ask me something about physics, I had general science. If I didn't have the exposure how was I able to answer the questions? I think another thing that probably hurt was not having college prep English. How did I know I was a slow reader? I got an A in all the English courses I took but no one told me those were the wrong English courses. They ask you to write a composition. I write a paragraph--three or four sentences. Well, they looked at that; this person doesn't know how to write. Who has taught me how to write? I mean, writing to me was three or four sentences. Because at most the questions had about that much space for the answers. So how was I supposed to know how to write a two-page composition in my first English class at college?

I had an instructor [at the community college] that was about the toughest instructor and that was the best thing that could have happened to me. First composition, got an F, flat F. I would go in and talk with him and say, "Why?" and he would sit down with me and point out what I had done wrong. He outlined several kinds of things for me and said, "Now each time you write a composition you want to try to keep it in this sequence." On the next test I got a D . I ended up getting a very weak C in the class but that was the proudest grade I have ever gotten.

If you want to talk about some highlights of my schooling, it's not what happened in elementary, junior high, and senior high. It started at community college. A second instructor was there, the worst instructor that I ever encountered in terms of knowing how to deal with people on a humanistic level but an excellent mathematician. He taught me, "If you don't do your homework don't come to class, or if you do come to class don't ask any questions because you're wasting my time." He was an instructor who didn't really worry about feelings. He wanted you to learn mathematics. He had no feelings about students' feelings. He would embarrass, he would put you down. At the time it was probably my first sensing of racism because I felt that he did not like me period. I discovered later that he didn't like Black students. I was the only Black in his class, probably one of the few Blacks to get through the calculus sequence at college.

[When I transferred to] the state college, I was not taking any social science classes, wasn't taking any history classes, and all my electives were technical classes. So I didn't get that daily bombardment of what the white man is doing and probably I might have been more sensitive to the notion of racism, even in high school, had I been in those types of classes. But being in technical classes you just don't address yourself to community problems, social problems. It was at that point that I really began to perk up more in terms of what's going on around me, but I still didn't have anything to feed on because the technical classes were requiring so much time and effort. The teachers that I had were very good teachers. I mean in most cases being the only Black in my class was really no problem. It was only when I was a senior that I really had a problem. I had an instructor in my physical science class. I was the only Black in the class. That might have been the low point of my educational experience because he seemed to have been on me every day. That damn instructor wouldn't ask anybody a question but me. He would just grill me--and not on one occasion but on numerous occasions. Several of the people came over and said, "He doesn't like you." But I still didn't use the term racism. I just felt that he didn't like me.

There was a physics professor who was probably instrumental in my finishing the degree at the state college. Not knowing anybody, I was really afraid to go in to talk to anybody. But he took the initiative, you know, very open in terms of saying, "If you're having problems, why don't you come in?" At the state college that was the only instructor that I ever visited. It was tough for me in college, very tough.

I didn't think either of my parents really understood what finishing college or what going to college was all about. My father, when I got my A.A. from the community college, said, "Well, are you finished now?" I said, "No, I got another one to go." And he said, " What are you going to do with that one? What can you do now?" You know, the notion that college prepared you for a job wasn't clear to my parents. I mean, how can a college degree prepare you for working on the assembly lines? Some of the people that I used to know used to criticize me all the time about "why are you in school?" "Boy, you just don't want to work, that's why you're in school." And I said, "Well, I'm going to get a job when I get out." "What kind of job are you going to get?" "Oh," I said, "probably an engineer or something." "What's an engineer?" You know, they just had no notion of what college was all about. Sometimes you look at yourself as being sort of a pioneer. I was the first in my family to get a college degree.

I was working for the post office. I think the post office is really what told me I'd better get something out of college because it was my second year at community college that I got a job at the post office. I hated it. I could see the games that they were playing. Blacks qualified that they were passing over. I hated the post office with a passion. I could walk in--just the smell of the mail! God, that did more in terms of my staying in school and deciding about doing something than any person could have done. I saw college as important.

Very few of the people that I was around at that time said too much about teaching. It was engineering. Now again, this was basically white students that I was around. Teaching was not one of the talked-about professions, which is kind of interesting. That tends to be the profession, or used to be the profession, that most Blacks talked about. When I went to the state college I continued in the engineering program but concentrated mostly on physics courses. I also began to work more in community programs, began to do some tutorial work. I think the church that I was attending at the time was getting a tutorial program going. I began to feel pretty good about working with people. I was beginning to get some recognition from Blacks and I think from whites. They were mostly baffled. Here this Black is studying physics and chemistry.

I declared the major in physics. I worked very hard in school. It wasn't something that was easy for me. A typical schedule, a daily routine might be: I had an eight o'clock class. I went to school from eight to twelve. I had to go to work at twelve-thirty. I would make sure I had my lunch with me and I would eat on the run. My advisor at the time was a pretty easy person to talk to. After telling him what I was doing on the side in terms of community work, he suggested that I might look at teaching in terms of a profession, if I enjoyed it. After graduating I went back in the Teacher Ed Program and I spent a year in the program. Each year at the end of their program, the professors would have a big party. The year that I went through I thought they didn't have the party but I discovered about a year later that they did have the party but I wasn't invited.

In my last semester at college I was student teaching. My cooperating teacher was a very good science instructor, very talented and knew how to work with people . We would sit down and talk. First time I taught in an all-white setting. My first three weeks I could barely eat, I was so tense. The master teacher sensed that I was tense. He said, "You got to relax." I kept saying, "I am relaxed." He said, "Look, I'll let you work in the class a few days by yourself, then I'll come back and help you or point out certain things." I told him to be really up front: "If I've got a problem, let me know what the problem is, don't mislead me or give me the impression that I'm doing a good job when you damn well know I'm not." One day out of the clear blue sky he asked me whether or not I was interested in teaching on a regular basis. The teachers at college said that if you're offered a job, don't worry about what grade level, the important thing is getting into the system. He asked me, how did I feel about a junior high school, and about three weeks later I was hired before I even finished the program.

I taught there a year and a half. Then I taught at the high school for two years. While I was teaching there I probably can count on two fingers the number of students I sent to the dean. There was one student who was a hostile son of a gun. He had a lot of problems and I kind of sensed that. I mean he would walk in ready to explode. I made him my helper. He was good on some days and other days he'd come in and he was hostile as hell. He had the fear in everybody's heart. I mean he just got to the point where I had to say something to him. I did. He jumped up in the middle of class and he said, "You Black son of a bitch!" I mean this is before the class. I didn't come back exploding at him. He stormed out of the class. I really didn't know what to expect and after school he came in and he apologized. I said I knew something was bothering him. He said that his father passed that morning. We sat and talked. He came back the next day. He apologized to the class. From that time we continued to have a pretty good relationship.

I left that high school because I couldn't teach beyond general science. The chemistry and physics, the 11th and 12th grade classes, were reserved for these two instructors. So when I went in and I just categorically asked (this was the end of the second year, I had put in for it twice): "I know I don't have Physics for this coming year, but can I teach it the following year?" The chairman said "No." I said, "What about the following year?" She said, "No." I said, "Will I have a chance to teach it?" She said, "No, you're very successful at the level that you're teaching. You work extremely well with general science people and these other instructors don't have the patience to work with them." Hell, I thought, if I develop patience to work with general science people, other people should develop patience. So I said, " O.K." and I left; I went right over to another high school and I talked with the principal there. He assured me that all instructors would have an equal chance teaching any level. I taught there two years.

This is the mid-sixties, the height of the riots, the Black consciousness. Some of it was spilling over into the schools. I was able to establish excellent rapport with both Blacks and whites. I almost switched over to the social sciences because I started being a guest speaker in various classes there and I attended a conference in which I was the guest speaker and I started reading a lot of books on Black history. But I still stayed with the physics. I sponsored the Black Students' Union there at the high school. They wanted to march out, boycott, but each time they talked about doing things like that, I wanted to know, "O.K., what do you want to boycott for?" "Well, they won't let us have our natural combs." "But we're not coming here to look good. We're coming here to learn." "Well, they're not serving soul food in the cafeteria." "But if they served soul food you might not even eat it. If you're going to march out, march out because they're not teaching Black history in the classrooms, and they don't have any books in the library. March out for that reason."

I had just about finished my course work for the Master's in physics and I was thinking about dropping out of the program because I wanted to become more involved with Black Studies. My advisor said, "Don't do it. You can make a much bigger contribution staying in physics. You would be more of a symbol, more of a model, because there aren't that many Blacks in physics. You've got enough Blacks in history and social sciences that can do what you want to do." And I said, "I still feel that I should be making a contribution to society or to the Black community." And we had several conversations. "Let me suggest this," he said, "You go ahead and finish the program, and then if you don't want to use the Master's, it's O.K., but if you decide to use it, you have it." I decided to go ahead and finish. I think that was the best advice that was given to me.

When I applied at this community college I tried to do my homework in terms of making sure I was acquainted with the community. If I reached the interviewing stage I would have some sort of understanding, some sort of background, of the type of things they might ask. Now at that time it might have been a situation in which, even though I was qualified, the important thing was that I was minority, and that might have been the key factor in selecting me. But I don't apologize in terms of qualifications because I had enough experience teaching. I had worked at all levels and I really couldn't see any reason why I would have been turned down.

So when I came here it was just teach, teach, teach. If I wanted to do something else, I could do something else but teaching would be primary. I had an adjustment to being around just whites, colleagues basically white. The only shocker probably was the notions, the ideas, that students would have about you when you would walk in, in terms of your qualifications. A lot of students here had never had a Black instructor, had never been around Black people. Now all of a sudden you got a Black instructor. It was an eye-opening situation for them. The first year that I taught here I taught a night class. When I walked in they asked me whether I was subbing for the regular instructor and I said, "Yes," and so when I came back the following week, they said "You're still subbing." "Yes, I'm still subbing." I think it was about the third meeting that they finally discovered that I was the instructor.

Probably most people have a misconception of the community college prior to actually getting involved in it. I looked at it when I came out of high school as a place just to go, you know. It didn't cost you much. I didn't go initially to pick up skills. There was just no place to go. But once I started attending I did see an opportunity to become career-oriented and once I started teaching I could see better that it represented a place for a second chance. The community college is a place where if people don't pick up the necessary skills when they're supposed to, they can come here and do that. I think it's also a place where if a person has the necessary skills but lacks the confidence of being out on their own, being able to make it, so to speak, this is kind of an interim place where they can come and get a feeling for what it is like in college, academically. Because when, I think, you go off to college, there's just a whole new ball game. I think a lot of times people feel that they can't cope with being away from home. Fear of being away from home and not doing well. I had the same sort of fears when I was in college. When I went over to the state college, the fear of flunking out, for me that fear was always there.

I think you have to pick and choose your classes [at this college], but that's even true at a four-year institution. You can take all of the easy classes and the easy profs and when you finish you don't have anything. People that I run into, especially community people, people who I grew up with who now have kids that are on the verge of finishing high school, I sit down with them and say, "Look, there isn't anything wrong with community college." Especially when I see their kids don't really have any strong sense of where they want to go or what they want to get into. If kids know basically what they want to do, what institution will meet those needs, you know, I say, O.K. But when you talk to a youngster and he or she says, "I don't know what I want to do, I'm just going to take some general education courses." Well, if you're in that bag, you might as well come to a community college and get your head screwed on in the right direction and then take off. You don't have to spend two or three years here. You can spend just a year or even just a semester, but the important thing is getting a good sense of direction, especially when somebody is footing the bill.

When you talk about the attrition rate, today especially, being very high, you have to consider the type of students we now are catering to. It used to be a time when you had a certain group that attended the community college. They in turn transferred to a four-year school. The vast majority of your population at that time looked as if they were transfer people. Over the last five, six, years, maybe even longer, it seems as if it's a recruitment for bodies, bodies being defined in terms of someone being eighteen and over and breathing. I think because of the type of student and the heavy recruitment we're now doing, I think the attrition rate will continue to grow. We're attracting people who shouldn't even be here. In some cases you don't know how they even got out of high school. When you get people here that shouldn't be here, there's no commitment to anything.

It seems like employers ask a little more of Blacks. Maybe not ask but demand a little more. A little more pressure is put on Blacks. I think a little more pressure is even put on me here at this college. Invariably, the first week of school, students tend to ask a hell of a lot of questions, questions that are not even relevant to the topic, and I think it's a situation of feeling you out, seeing whether or not you know the material. I don't sense that same type of attitude when they go into a white instructor's class. I think it's assumed that he or she knows. But I think sometimes with a Black instructor, it's "prove to me that you do know and then I'll listen." If I differ with the book it's difficult for them to accept the fact that I'm saying the author is wrong, period. But I think, once I get going, it's really like someone just opens their eyes. I've seen some white instructors that I know weren't prepared and there's no overt pressure by the students to do anything about it. I've also seen a Black instructor that was ill-prepared and he got a lot of direct pressure. I'm not apologizing for either instructor. I think you should be prepared, but let's treat both people the same way.

Another example: there was a problem that came up in our physics text. The problem was going around in the department. I ran across the same problem and solution in another text. So I made a copy directly from the text, verbatim, didn't leave out anything, and I brought it to the department. Several of the instructors said, "No, it can't be right." "Well, show me what's wrong with it." Well, they don't know what's wrong with it but, "It's not right. It's just not right." I was kind of disturbed. They think they're rejecting my solution. All I've done was just say, "Here's a problem, take a look at it." I didn't take the credit for the solution. I didn't say where I had gotten it. I said, "Take a look and tell me what's wrong with it." But here was something where there wasn't a specific answer for it and it was a matter of--if you didn't think the solution was correct, you had to show how it was wrong. They couldn't show that it was wrong, but at the same time they couldn't accept it as correct. Things like that, that you don't get too pushed out of shape over.

As another example, our general science textbook. I fought the book bitterly. I said it was a lousy book and a number of people just couldn't accept that, so I just kept up so much noise that at the second department meeting on the agenda was a reaction to all new books. When I came I had several pages of specific notes. When they got to me I started going through very specific points. Before the end of the semester, just about the whole department was acknowledging that it was a lousy book.

I find that, if I have a criticism, I have to be very specific and detail it out, do all my homework; and I think sometimes other people might not have to do all that. One of the problems that you really have to watch when those subtle things are there--you've got to kind of ask yourself, "Are those things because of me, a person, or because of me, a Black person?" I try not to be in the dark on anything but I also really just don't try to magnify anything. You know, sometimes it can be you the individual, period. It's independent of race. Color might be a factor but it might be a minor factor, or it might be a major factor. I can't go into the heads of other people and I try not to, you know.

There was one instructor who had a hell of a time calling me by my name. He called me every kind of name. When I'd see him, I'd just call him another name and he got the message. There was another instructor--I said, "Look, name is Thatcher . Some people call me Bob for short, some people call me Robert . That's my given name. Now those are the names that you address me with. Any other name I don't respond to."

I had a student that called me "coach." Hell, I'm not a coach. I'm an instructor; you can call me by my first name, you can call me Robert, you can call me Dr. Thatcher, but I'm not a coach. Whites sometimes will call Blacks coaches. They have a bunch of strange names they sometimes address Blacks with. When you sense that type of thing happening you just say, "Look, I want you to get off and get on here," and I think when you make that clear, people tend to respect you. The basic thing that I try to do, whether it's on a social level or a working level, is to tell people to deal with me as a person, not any of these stereotype trips. Deal with me as a person.

I try to be very academic in nature; when I go into the classroom, I tell students, "I'm not here trying to win friendship, I'm here trying to teach you science. If you hate me and know my science I've accomplished my job. If you end up liking me and learning my science that's even better. If you end up liking me and don't know science I've failed." For some it's tough for them to accept that. Now, whether it's accepting that because I'm Black or accepting that because it's a different teaching situation, I don't even get into that. I'm just saying what I expect. You come to my class to work. I don't want to hear any excuses. When you complain that I work you too hard, that my exams are too hard, I don't get pushed out of shape over that.

I came out of the university with a Ph.D.--not in physics; it's in education. I didn't know and I still don't know exactly where teaching might take me. I've really enjoyed teaching. I still enjoy teaching; but I kind of figured at some point I might want to do something else, and I felt that with so much experience in education that if I could get some type of training that will pull from my educational background that would be nice. So I have looked at administration as a possible alternative.

I had to look at the degree in terms of where I was working. I think time was a big factor and at the college I could arrange my schedule where I could go to the university and teach here in the afternoons or teach here in the mornings and go there in the afternoons. I think I've struggled quite a bit since I've been in college with somewhat of an inferiority complex, based on not having those six years of prep work--the junior high school time, the high school time. I've always felt that that's a critical period. If kids can get prepared in junior high school and senior high school they can just about go anyplace. But if you try and jump over that training, when you get to college you're competing with people who did the English, who had high school physics. When they went to college they built on those experiences. Well, here I'm going to college and I'm taking physics for the very first time. It's obvious that I have to work much harder. When you have to work much harder and longer than other people you say, "Gee, does it take me that long to learn?" But as you begin to examine it more you say, well, look, if I'm given those same sorts of experiences, then when I build on those courses later, you know, I'll be O.K.

So I thought the university would be a good opportunity. There were no Blacks that I'd ever heard of that came out of the university so I had no models, no images. Most of the Blacks that went to college went to the state college. The university was just a mystery place for me. This lady, a Black lady, was working on her Ph.D. at the time and she asked me, "Why don't you work on your Ph.D.?" Then there was another instructor in the humanities who was working on his Ph.D. And he said, "Man, you should start on your Ph.D. You've got enough time." So it was that type of thing that got me looking at the university; all of a sudden I did see someone that I rubbed shoulders with that was actually there.

Normally it takes you two years to do your course work but I had to spend a year going back and picking up courses. I actually was on the verge of quitting the program. You can get encouragement from home but a lot of times they really don't quite understand the pressures that you're under. You're trying to be a family person, you're trying to teach full time, and you're trying to go to school full time. There's only so much pressure that you can stand and I was just basically exhausted.

As I worked on the degree and I saw the job mobility around here and I saw whites in administrative positions, and they didn't have a degree, then that began to tell me that the degree is really not necessary. Because I've seen a white without a degree and a Black with a degree and the white got the job. It kind of told me that really the degree is not the key.

Sometimes when you push a lot and you don't back up and regroup I think you reach a point where you start burning yourself out. I think you have to feel rewarded about what you do. Over the last couple of semesters, especially, I've had a very high drop-out rate. I've really been bothered with that because in the past I haven't had a high drop-out rate. I can't understand that because I feel that I'm working much harder. I'm doing, I think, a much better job. I gave a take-home exam; I said, "Get help from any source." But damn it, when you tell students they can get help from anybody and they don't do that, it makes you stop and say maybe I oughta tell 'em, "Everybody gets an A if you just come to class." Maybe when you reach that point, maybe you ought to begin to think about something else, because you've lost the desire to do what you originally set out to do and that's to provide a legacy in terms of something academically.

I've always felt that everybody should have a legacy. Everybody should leave some type of imprint, make some sort of a contribution. Teaching is something that I can do. I can help others by doing that. I look back at my own struggling time in college and I say, I should be able to make it a lot easier for people who come from essentially the same background—that is, where they didn't really get started in school. I try to keep that in mind, trying to leave some type of imprint. When you talk about tearing down racism and discrimination, you can do it in a peaceful way. I've always felt that you could change attitudes by actually being out involved in something where people are not accustomed to seeing you there. I see myself leaving an imprint in terms of doing something for society, helping the races see that they can be together. In the process of teaching physics I have a lot of students who talk to me about things probably that they would never talk about to others. They've never had a chance to just sit down with a Black person and say, how do you feel, what's it like, do you have problems, do you have pain, do you have joy?

One of the reasons I press so in terms of demanding from my students is because I don't see them as being "terminal" students. I teach my courses as if they are planning to go on to a four-year school and I try to adopt some of the same attributes, characteristics, that an instructor in college would adopt, expecting students to be able to present problems in a logical and organized manner on paper. Students being able to explain problems, being able to analyze--I think those are important principles. I tell students that they will learn more than science in my class. They'll learn how to take notes, how to utilize the notes, how to go look for resource information. If you're having problems, don't give up. If something is not right, you ask questions. I think ninety percent of the time, in order to be successful, you've got to know a lot about the system and I think that's what probably has helped me. Even coming here I know that experienced instructors like new instructors to sit down and talk with them, come in and visit their classes. Again you know, you hate to draw any conclusions, but I find myself initiating more, exchanging tests, talking to people about classroom situations. I had several instructors that came in, but it was about how to handle a Black student, rather than handling a student in general. It had to be something related to a Black problem, you know, if they were to come in. So I think I've really bent over backwards. I do the initiating most of the time. So here again might be one of those subtle things. As an example, two other instructors, or three of us, have eight o'clock classes together. I would always come and wait or make sure that they were ready to go and we'd all walk together. But they didn't do the same thing for me. You see, you're always reaching out but there's no one reaching back for you.

Commentary

Although issues of minority status are central to the experience of these participants, those issues are far from all-inclusive. Each of these participants must contend with all the issues of working in a community college that face nonminority faculty and staff: the tension between a sense of standards in college teaching and an approach to grading and testing dominated by a concern for both the progress of the individual student and the retention of numbers of students in the college; the enervation and self-doubt caused by large numbers of students who, pulled by the need to work, conflicts in personal situations, and confrontations with the demands of the subject-matter, drop out of classes; the ambiguity of the Ph.D. in community colleges, the degree seeming to hold simultaneously the possibility of both status and scorn; the separation of research from teaching and the anti-intellectualism that stems from such a basic disjunction; the difficult role of counselors who sometimes become scapegoats for those who fault them for not taking care of all the symptoms of institutional complexities and contradictions; faculty's diminished sense of opportunity and power and the attraction to administration as a path toward some leverage in the institution.

These overarching themes are in ample evidence in the preceding chapters. These issues stem from the place of the community college in the hierarchical structure of higher education. The experience of being community college faculty members involves contending with these issues no matter what the faculty member's social class , race, or gender.

Faculty who are members of minorities in this country must contend with the structural forces that all community college faculty must face to one degree or another. They must also process the complex interaction of racism, social class, power and opportunity, as these factors affect their everyday lives in community colleges. Daniel Ramirez's profile shows that it took an act of personal rebellion to free himself from the web of circumstances that acted to keep most of his peers in their accustomed places. Robert Thatcher, despite the persistent undermining by counselors, developed a deep core of confidence that if he were taught something he could learn it, and if he had not been taught it, he could not be faulted for not knowing. That confidence strengthened by urgings from his mother and his mother's academic employers led him to take the step to college. For Cheryl Collins it was a different matter. Her parents were so determined that she and her brother receive a college education that they deliberately incurred the physical and psychological cost for themselves and their children of moving to a suburb in which they were the only Black family.

What stood out for us, as we listened to and then studied these life stories and the stories of many of the other minority participants, was the concrete detail of how often their individual efforts and those of their families were confronted and potentially undermined by their schools' attempts to track them into nonacademic vocational curricula. Thatcher enjoyed and was successful in the shop classes into which he was tracked. But not seeing Black craftsmen or Black skilled tradesmen in the society at large, he wondered whether he would be allowed to make a living in those areas. Ramirez was an outstanding student at his home high school. But when he enrolled in a high school in a nearby city he was automatically placed in non-college-preparatory classes because he was Mexican and assumed to be a migrant worker's son and, thus, not college material. Collins's family moved to an all-white suburb to improve her schooling so that she would be able to go to college. Despite the fact that she was a leader in the school and clearly committed to going to college, she recalls no instance of a teacher or counselor suggesting to her that home economics was not the only career field she could consider. The times, the attitude toward opportunities for women, and the fact that she was Black, all seemed to combine to track her by omission rather than commission.

These stories are matched by the experiences of other minority participants in the study. Jesus Lopez, in chapter five, recalled how he had spent a year in a study hall period because he refused to take the shop classes a counselor prescribed for him and the counselor refused to schedule the full load of academic courses he wanted. Other minority participants recalled that they were never told in junior high or high school that there were different sections of classes for those who were college-bound and those who were not. Becoming aware of the workings of the system and then fighting it were common experiences in the lives of the minority participants.

Black participants in the study who grew up in the rural South and attended all-Black schools faced a different type of tracking. The stories we were told were of schools' encouraging a sense of options. But the reality of rural Southern poverty and the limited lines of work that were open to Blacks at the time deeply affected career choices almost as effectively as if they had been tracked by a counselor.

The repeated stories of tracking of members of minority groups is not new information. It has been documented for some time (Cicourel and Kitsuse 1963). What stands out is, while the episodes happened years ago, they were told as though they were psychologically current. Through their individual efforts and with the support of key family members and encouraging teachers, the participants beat the systemic attempts to track them into vocational areas. But the amount of energy it took represents a significant cost. For it seemed to us, on reflection, that the meaning of the stories these participants told us is that if you are a member of a minority and of working-class origin in this society, you have to work "twice as hard" to get where you get. Some of that work is public, but much of it is deeply personal and private.

Not only is the path to success more strewn with obstacles for members of minorities, but once they have secured their positions it seems that they often have to work harder, do their job better, more thoroughly, more conscientiously, than their nonminority colleagues. They are expected to be, for example, especially sensitive to the needs of minority students. Colleagues consult them about problems they might be having with minority students but seldom think that they might have considerable insight in other areas. Collins constantly has to be alert to the interests of Blacks and women. She often goes to meetings and finds herself the only Black and the only woman present. She is under constant pressure to see things from three different perspectives simultaneously. As a representative she never can sit back at a meeting and be simply an individual. Thatcher and Ramirez stress their conscientiousness in their work; they know and live by the rules and the policies. They are aware that minority faculty are more liable to criticism than are their nonminority colleagues.

Being a minority faculty member on faculties which are heavily skewed toward the nonminority means a constant susceptibility to the not-so-hidden injuries of racism. Yet Thatcher and Collins and other minority participants pointed out that, while they were sensitive to such matters, all slights could not be automatically construed as racist. While the profiles indicate a readiness on the part of the minority participants to be tentative about possible racial underpinnings of actions towards them, the reverse seldom seems to hold true. Thatcher talks about reaching out to his white colleagues by adhering to patterns of respect and civility that are part and parcel of academic departments. He comes to realize that as much as he takes initiative in such matters, his initiatives are seldom reciprocated. He earned a doctorate in education with the notion that his degree would be relevant to his hopes of rising within the system. He subsequently saw that whites got administrative positions whether or not they had relevant degrees. Ramirez, a scholar by training, steers a steady and consistent course that reflects his interest in being a historian in an institution that really wants him to be only a history teacher. He develops an ironic detachment that allows him, in the face of institutional swings of the pendulum, to hold steadfast to his sense of professionalism and quietly to educate those around him about the continuing inequities facing Mexican Americans in California.

The experiences of the three participants we have presented in profiles are infused with inequities. Much of their time must be taken up contending with those inequities. The time and energy that must be spent is a loss to the individuals, to their students, colleagues, and to the total institution whose collective energies and talents might be spent otherwise. Our interviews of other minority faculty in skewed settings indicate a similar pattern of experience. Minority faculty who work within community colleges as a "few among the many" are both actors in, and acted upon by, the larger institutional structure. Community colleges operate at the crossroads of conflict in our society between egalitarian ideals on the one hand and the realities of social class and race on the other. The inequities in the minority participants' experiences give us pause as we reflect on community colleges' ability to provide equitable opportunity for a wide range of students.

Chapter Twelve

Experience Tells:
Second Careers in The Community College

Introduction to the Profiles

Edith Powell, Eric Hanson, and Joseph Ryan come to teach in a community college after a period of time spent in other work. Powell and Ryan virtually or actually retired from one work world and moved to another. Hanson was forced to leave a teaching position at a four-year college. What connects each of these three stories with one another is the point of view the participant has on work in the community college, a point of view informed by the previous work identity and a point of view offering, therefore, the insights of the "outsider." As we shall discuss in the commentary on these profiles, Powell, Hanson, and Ryan not only reinforce several themes already highlighted in earlier profiles and commentary, they provide as well additional perspectives on what it is like to work in a community college.

Profile

EDITH POWELL

(Edith Powell, a woman in her fifties, teaches business courses in a community college in Massachusetts. She was interviewed in the summer of 1982.)

From the time I first started to go to school I always wanted to be a teacher. I knew that. I hated to play dolls or house, I always wanted to play school. There are five in the family and I am the middle one; older brother and sister and a younger brother and sister.

My younger sister---there is only two years difference and we did everything together, you know it was almost like being twins. My father was a steam fitter and he never had a vacation because they never got vacations . They had to work all the time except for when there was no work, which means he was out of work or on strike. My mother and father were not educated, probably seventh or eighth grade as far as they went. So when we were growing up they knew nothing about college or how you got there or what you did there.

When I got into high school I took the commercial courses, bookkeeping, typing, and those courses. I did not have college preparatory courses. When I did get into bookkeeping in the tenth grade, my instructor could see that I could do it . He said to definitely go on with my education and to do accounting. When it came time to graduate and get a job I went out on two interviews, with the telephone company and a restaurant company. My accounting instructor said, "That looks good now, but if you go to the phone company as a bookkeeper, thirty years from now you are going to be a bookkeeper at whatever the going rate is for bookkeepers. If you go to the restaurant company and get lower money now, that is a growing company and you will advance; there is discrimination against women in the accounting department at the telephone company and there might not be in a small growing company." So on his advice I went to the restaurant company and I was there twenty-five years. They promoted me and they gave me the same management development courses and the same promotions as the men there.

My accounting instructor said to go to college nights. I transferred to the university for my bachelor's in accounting. I started out going three nights a week along with working full-time, and the last two years I did two nights a week. It was about six years, two nights a week, for my bachelor's and then it was eight years, only one night a week, for my master's. I was in a supervisory position at that time and was traveling, but they always scheduled my travel plans around my school. I worked in every accounting department the company had, payroll, insurance, receivable, regular accounting, internal auditing, and then I got into systems work and I would work with the computers and I would design systems for distribution centers. I had a chance to see all the United States at the company's expense.

When I talked with my instructor about getting the best job and going on for my education, I said, "I'll go and I'll get my masters'. I'll work for twenty years and then I'll teach for twenty years. Only at a community college because I don't want to put up with the hassles you get with those high schoolers. If they are paying for it, they are going to be good. You don't need to go to college and get teaching credits in education courses to teach at a community college, all they want is a master's and experience in your field, so that is what I'll have." That was in my mind as I was doing all of that hard work, loads of overtime, supervisory position and doing schooling. I really worked hard. That is how I got the promotions. When I left I was with the financial division of the whole country. Everyone would say to me, "Why do you work so hard? You are never going to get a reward for it." And I am sayng, "Hey, I'm working hard so that I can get out of here and the last twenty years I am going to be just like I was back in high school again. I am going to work nine months of the year, then I am going to rest for three months." Also I got my public accounting certificate so I am a licensed public accountant. I think I took a $15,000 cut when I started here at the college ten years ago. So I need to supplement that income. Now I have a part-time public accounting practice as well as the teaching.

A friend and I talked about where the community colleges were. I said, "I want this community college," and he said, "Good luck to you, you and everyone else in the world wants to work there, you know." I said, "Well, that is the one that I want and when I am ready to make the change I will contact them." And I did contact them and I had to wait four years before I got an opening to come here. This college contacted me and I interviewed and they said, "We want you in September." So I had to sit down and say, "Should I stay four years and then go into teaching?" and I said, "Edith, if you don't do it now, you will never do it." So I bit the bullet and said, "I'm going." I was forty-two at the time. Certainly that was a bad time to leave somewhere and try something because if it didn't work out, it's harder to get back. It was a risk, but I wanted to do it and I said, "You only live once." I have always been a goal-oriented person. I've always said, "That's what I want to do." I've never married, and I didn't make that a conscious decision. I just said I'm going to proceed with what I'm doing and if I meet someone, fine, if I don't all the same. And so that is the way I went through it.

I loved school, I always did my work. I wanted to go home and play school with everyone who would play it. I would have been nine or ten during World War II. I would plan out what we were going to invade and train the pilot. It was always something dealing with leading or being the leader. I was very active in scouting. I loved scouts, loved groups. In the fifth grade the teacher used to read Toby Tyler to the class, that story about Toby Tyler joining the circus. I did not get any grammar but we got a great appreciation for reading. We read and did book reports, so I am a bookoholic today. I am a football fan. I always did that with my father. The two of us would sit and watch the football games. He worked every day that he could work. And very good to us when he wasn't working. During the war, he got extra gas ration coupons for being at the shipyard. He was also a Red Cross instructor and he got extra coupons for that. He used to ride his bike to the shipyard and ride his bike to the Red Cross so we had all those coupons. On the weekends we went to all the state parks so I loved hiking and anything with nature because we used to take little trips every weekend and hike and have picnics. My father was very quiet. My mother made all the decisions. He gave his paycheck to her and she did all the financial business. He didn't care, you know, if he got his lunch money, that was all he needed.

My mother worked hard too. She used to keep that house so clean we couldn't even sit in the living room. But the dog would go and roll in the brook, come in all mud and he could go in the living room. She loved dogs. We always had two dogs, never one, she always wanted the dog to have a companion. She died about five years ago and I still have her last two dogs. She always worked hard keeping the house clean and then used to iron all the kids' clothes. She did all the heavy inside work. My father did all the outside. She would never allow us to do any housework. The only way that I learned to do a bed was when I had to make it. I am not a good cook because she never allowed us to cook. I was out working with my father, so I know how to take care of the lawn and I love gardening and I can paint my own house.

Not much homework in elementary school, but in high school we did. My last two years in high school I worked as a relief cashier on Monday night and Saturdays. I always got on the honor roll. I always loved sports. I played basketball, softball, I went to all the baseball and football games that the male players had. They did have like a semi-pro softball team of women softball players called the Raiderettes, and I did play for them. They usually used me as a pinch hitter and what they did was, before the game they would have one of our pitchers pitch to me--and they all knew that I liked it high and outside--so they would pitch high and outside, and I would wollop the thing a country mile because they pitched it right where I wanted it. So the other team would see me doing this. Then when I come up to pinch-hit, you know they would all back up and I would bunt. They trained me to bunt and I would get up and be the one who would bunt in a pinch-hit situation. That was high school. In high school I liked math. Always liked math and geography, history. I thought I would like to be an archeologist because I would love looking into previous civilizations and stuff like that.

I went to church from the time I was three years old, the same church. Even when we moved my father used to drive us back for church in the morning and then for fellowship in the afternoon. I was in the choir. Maybe I was about ten when I got up and gave a little speech about the need to have money to buy Bibles to give to everyone all over the world. I thought I would love to be a missionary . They would read stories to us. I went right up until the twelfth grade, when we got good discussion groups, how you felt about right and wrong and that kind of thing. Went on a lot of hiking trips and museums and plays.

In ninth grade you had to plan your next three years program. My advisor said, "Are you going to college?" and I said, "I don't think so." "Okay, then, this is what you should take." And that's how I got into the commercial course. My family couldn't say, "Hey, maybe you would like college, maybe you ought to look at these, you are capable of doing it." She didn't even look at my marks, you know, to see how I was doing. She said, "Well then if you are not, you ought to go into the commercial course, take business math, take bookkeeping, take typing, take office practice."

See I didn't know any better, what did I know then? As a ninth grader I didn't know how you got into college. I didn't know how you possibly got there--if you could ever get there without money, because I knew that there would never be any money to go. Because at home there was never any extra money. There was a lot of handing down. I got my older sister's clothes and my younger sister got mine. There just wasn't that extra money there. So if you are not going to go, why think about it, just do this then.

Oh, did I hate typing and office practice because I am not mechanically minded at all. I think I had three years of typing and at the end of three years I could do forty-five words a minute and I would still have about three errors on the page. I can remember not liking office practice and didn't like the teacher too well either. I can remember several days just walking out of the class and saying, "Not taking this class." She would come chasing down the corridor, come back here, come back here, and I would keep walking to the office of my accounting teacher. I just liked the accounting and wanted to do that. That is, the kind of accounting work I did when I first started out. But then when you became a supervisor or auditor or a systems person you can create the whole thing the system and the procedure that you follow, but you don't have to do it. Someone else does it. That is the part of the accounting work that I like, the creating more than the actual doing.

I had the same English teacher in tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade. She would critique your writing; "Keep it simple, state what you want to say." That was the training I needed because in business that's what you do, too. I always liked history, geography, civics. I only had one science course in the ninth grade. I didn't have to take things like biology or chemistry. It wasn't required in the commerical course and going to evening school, the liberal arts weren't required , so I am a person who's definitely technically trained. I never had a psych course or sociology. I had economics because that is really business, but literature or foreign language or music appreciation--never had those.

I am the first generation, the only one in my family, to have a degree. My younger sister went to college but she got married and didn't go on. My brother quit school in tenth grade and went in the navy and my oldest sister graduated from high school, went to work for the telephone company, and then married. But my older sister's two girls did go on to college. I think that they are going because there was someone who could tell them, hey, it is possible, you can do it, the money is there somewhere. In high school my instructor pointed out that I ought to go on to accounting. This particular school, he said, is the best school for accounting. I went into the university's bachelor's-and master's-in-business program.

It used to take me hours to do my homework because I am a slow learner. I have to really do all the work, I can't take any short cuts, I have got to do it step by step, but then once I know it, I really know it. Somehow I think I got an excellent liberal education through an emphasis in career education. I'm saying you can be a liberally educated person with your emphasis on career.By that time I was working. I think my mother and father were very pleased. I think they thought staying in school through high school was important. After that they didn't think it was that important. My mother would say, "Why are you going to school?" I think they were real proud of me when I did do it. I can remember they attended graduation.

When I first started out in the company, just doing the bookkeeping, I remember always being able to learn what they told me to learn real quickly and doing a good job of it. As a result I got some pretty quick promotions. I remember talking with the assistant controller after working there two years. I can remember him saying, "Are there any more at home like you?" And that was when my youngest sister was graduating from high school.

"Send her in." That's how she started working at the company, too, and did real well for them. I can remember being real friendly with all the people there and going on vacations with people from the company, from the time I was young. When I got into insurance I would handle workman's comp, filed the court form and everything, appear at court and testify. It wasn't a boring kind of job ever. I was probably nineteen or twenty when I made my first trip and I had never been in a plane before in my life. I flew to Pittsburgh and I had to rent a car. When I first started doing the traveling, it was a smaller company. Women couldn't travel, you know. Our controller said, "Hey, you know how to do the work and you know how to drive, you can do it as well as a man, do it if you want." So I really just hit the right company at the right time, and they had the right kind of management that was not prejudiced in any way. They would let you do whatever you were capable of doing. I never had any problems with sexual harassment or anything like that, they just accepted you, you know, you went along that way.

Anyone who works in systems really deals with three words: systems, procedures, and methods. So you have a system that is made up of all these procedures and they all have to fit together to make an efficient system and then you want the best method to accomplish that. Back in about 1969 one of the auditors asked me to be their speaker at a meeting on how a woman could be an internal auditor and do the traveling and all that jazz as well as a man. Then they said, "Hey, she ought to write that up and we will put it in the internal auditors' magazine," and so I did. Then the other chapters said, "Can we have her speak?" This was late sixties. Then they came out with aprofile of systems man, and they had the man's profile on the cover. Well, we hit the roof. We said, "Hey there are women in systems work," so ever since has come out "profile of a systems person" with a profile of a male and female. I think I did sort of pioneer things like that. How do the men get where they are? They have mentors, you know, someone helps them along. I think every woman in business has to do that same thing, if she is higher up. Some of the people that I trained now have good jobs, they are the director of budgets and things like that. And that gives me satisfaction, that was sort of like teaching.

I still see the company people an awful lot. I go back. The secretary to the treasurer is a good friend of mine, meets me for lunch once in a while. I usually stop in one or two times a year to see them and the controller always says, "When are you coming back?" and I don't say never.

Right now I have a headache from all the work here. When school is in season, I work about fifty-five hours a week easily. I have every day two hours of accounting classes. I wake up at six a.m , take a shower and wash my hair, go out and make my lunch and make my breakfast, listen to the weather and the sports news. Then I usually comb my dogs, give each one their heartworm medicine, then go get dressed and get ready to leave. Get in the car. It is about a half an hour ride. Listen to music all the way in, so I get nice and relaxed. I usually get here about between eight and quarter past eight for my nine o'clock class. I have everything in piles for what class I am going to teach. This semester I'm also teaching two evening courses and I don't want to teach evenings.

As the coordinator of the management program, I have been involved in establishing a management development program which offers for employers in the area staff development seminars for their employees. I have ten people in the course. I have three foremen, I have a manager of the social security office, two women from the bank, the owner of a dress shop. I have a manager from the hospital. That is on top of my responsibilities in the day which is to coordinate the management program . We have a lot of part-time instructors now, all of my Principles of Management are taught by part-timers. Therefore I have to see them and make sure that they are doing a good job. We don't have a day faculty to do it, we all have our work loads completed and there are empty sections. We have to fill them with part-timers. I'm on a committee on resource allocation, pointing out how this is not right to have part-timers teaching the basic principles course in my major. And one hundred percent of Retail Management is taught by part-timers, almost ninety percent of hotel restaurant courses and that is just too many. I am a part of the Business Technologies Division. There are fifteen full-time people in that division. We have a third of the student population in the business division and we are fifteen full-time people out of one hundred. That is a little out of balance there, okay.

Besides teaching my courses I have the coordinating to do, and then we all have at least thirty-five advisees. I do another six to twelve informally because they are in this program and they have a liberal arts advisor that doesn't know anything about the management or accounting careers. So they want to come and get information from me. That is a lot of students and you see them during the semester if they want to add or drop or if they have a question. I am Coordinator of the Management Program and Associate Professor of Accounting and Management. I usually only have about ten graduates in the program by the time they get to the end, because they have either decided to transfer or go into another program or they may decide they want to specialize in retail management or hotel management, not general management.

I tend to be the kind of teacher who is content-oriented. I know accounting and I know what they have to learn, I try to decide the best way they would learn this and then I proceed on that basis. I try to recap the key things out of each chapter that I will go over. I demand quite a bit. I look at everyone's homework papers. They will have three or four homework problems in a week and I want to look at each one and critique them. We have what we consider two lab days where they are working on their homework and I'm reviewing it and critiquing it with them. We know that we have to cover so many chapters and we have eight sections of Accounting I with about twenty-five students in each one and we all have the same syllabus so that we are all doing the same thing, the same homework problems, we do prepare our own hour quizzes and final. I try to break it down to its essentials and relate it to what 's going on in their life in the outside world all the time. That is what I try in any course that I am teaching, whether it is accounting or management or whatever. You have to have a budget to run your business properly. If you take a business career major, you are talking about real life. I get good student participation. They will ask questions.

I get a lot of students who are struggling. They are really struggling, but they are really trying, and they feel free to come up and ask questions of me. In every class I have three that have not completed one homework assignment, so I have not seen any of their homework. This is no way to learn accounting, it is definitely a drill kind of a course. I tell them that there is only one way to learn accounting, do it. Can't read the book and listen to me, you got to do it yourself. Everyone who does their homework and is current passes my exam. When I give out the midterm warnings, I am going to say, "Well, are you going to have me sign your drop slip now? Don't want you to get an F at the end of the course."

The younger students, I think they are probably the first ones in the family to go to college; we don't get the students that go to Williams or somewhere like that. They tend to be from a family where parents haven't gone to college. They think it is like high school which is the main problem the students have, they think it is like high school, that you warm your seat and they move you on. They don't realize you are supposed to do some things, you are supposed to think, you are supposed to do your own scheduling. When your homework is due, you are supposed to do it. That is a big change I think for them. And when I try, like cases in the management course, there is no right answer, well, oh God, they hate that, there has got to be a right answer. You know, what is the answer? They don't like the ambiguity of things . There is something in the book that is wrong: oh, they can't believe that.

Over the years the students that I have been close to have been the older ones, the returning ones. One just called me yesterday , she is now the assistant administrator of the county hospital. She was an excellent accounting student and she went on and got her degree. She started out at the hospital as an accountant, but they could see how good she was and right a way she was up into the management ranks. She was an older student, married with about three children, very personable, didn't really have troubles studying at all. Just a natural intelligent person and common sense. Another student in accounting, now she is vice-president of the local chapter of the American Society of Woman Accountants. I really don't know what kind of a person likes accounting. You either like it or you don't, that is definite. You have to be neat and sort of meticulous. I try to explain why I am fussy about making your numbers clear. We are doing a computer problem now and they will learn that if they don't do it clearly even they can't read it. They will code it then they will go down the computer input and input it, and if they write it too messy they are going to get the wrong answer. I started in business in 1949 and we got our first computer in about 1952. I have seen the whole evolution of that computer field.

I have some people, they do all the homework and they understand it but when it comes time for the exam they get mental blocks. That is particularly true of some of the returning students. The returning students tend to be the older students, whether it is a person from the service or housewife that is coming back. There is a lot of stress for them, I think, to get good grades, so they tend to panic and freeze for an exam. I have one returning student I know and she didn't pass hardly any of the hour quizzes, but she got one hundred on the final. By the time of the final everything had clicked together and she was able to ace that. The returning, what we call the older student, highly motivated students definitely. A lot of them have children in school and so they don't want to come home and get all C's on their report card. So there is pressure on them to get the A or B. The returning students tend to be more woman I would say. I will have six or seven older women students in a class of twenty-five and only two older male students. A lot of them are vets. They have been in the service for ten, some of them twenty years, and they come back and want to get a major in business. Or they are students who went out and worked and then realized, "Hey, if I really want to get anywhere I am going to have to come back and go to school." Those tend to be a little younger, maybe they are about twenty-four, whereas the others could be anywhere from forty to fifties. The women tend to be thirty to forty-five. They are excellent students to have in class. They are not afraid to ask the questions. In a course like management where there is a lot of participation, we do group activities and discuss a case; the returning students are excellent in those classes, they really participate.

For textbooks, generally we decide on a committee basis. I'll talk to the person who teaches finance, who teaches management personnel, and we will agree on the textbook. Only in certain courses do we have a common syllabus such as accounting. They have to be prepared to go on to Accounting II. Usually the text is committee, the syllabus and all the exams are individually determined by the instructor. The copy of the syllabus is reviewed. I see it, so if I really saw that it didn't look like a really good syllabus, then I would talk with that person. And then of course the dean of faculty gets a copy of everyone's syllabus as well.

I am the only female instructor in the business area of accounting and management. Accounting, management, data processing are male-dominated. Retailing is a woman's field, so our coordinator for retail management is a woman. My career happened to be in what had been previously a male-dominated career. That is going to change a lot because now the bulk of all the accounting students are women; there are only forty percent male.

I have been here ten years, and I am finally at the same wage that I was at the company when I left it . I had to wait four years for my first promotion, and it has been six since that one. I got my tenure right away, that wasn't a problem; but the problem with the promotion is that if an older professor doesn't retire, there is no opening. And so we don't have that many openings. The third year here I was the president of the union. I said, "If you people don't get a union, you will have nothing. You are not going to get anywhere because I can see how management make their decisions around here, you know the fair-haired boys get this or that, the others don't." This is another thing having to do with my father. He was a steam fitter and was very active in the union. So we used to have discussions --I would tell him the union is terrible for you. You are working all that hard and you are getting the same wage as someone who could just be sluffing off. Here I am here only a year and I say, hey, we better have a union. You know, I am going to get politically involved if I feel strongly about something. I am not going to sit back and expect the other guy to do it.

We finally got in this contract release time to be a coordinator. They know my performance over the years. I am not trying to get away with something. I am trying to make it fair and make it something that I know that I can humanly do and do well, not do so much that nothing is done well. Last semester we put our foot down . Again, that is a big difference between industry and academia. In industry you know they determine where resources should be put, where the biggest need is and they make the decisions and in academia management is not used to making those decisions. Our dean of administration says that is the way it should be done, but it is too politically involved. What division would we cut down or increase? This college isn't ready to face that yet. I said, "Well, I know they are not, but there is a boss of this place, call the president, and trustees, and are they going to make the decisions?" But they won't. We will not have a prioritized plan for years and years.

When I started work in the company, I was doing the bookkeeping or accounting myself, but as soon as you become a manager, your main task is to develop the people working for you so that they can always do more and more. You want to get them so that they can do your job so when someone says it is time for you to move up, you can say, well X is ready to take my spot. I think my whole life has been focused on enjoying the teaching. When we had to install systems all over the country, that too was teaching. So I feel that through my job in management I had been teaching for many, many years in industry. The big difference is that when you train those managers in industry, they are away from their responsibilities for the day and they are wined and dined, so they love being there. They know that if they don't learn they are going to be in trouble. So they are highly motivated to absorb what you are giving them. So it was relatively easy to be successful with those kind of people, they picked up what you gave to them. Why I think I am so successful with the older students is because they are far more motivated, you know they have a goal and they are moving toward it and they see how what you are telling them is really tying in . What I say is important. Whereas the eighteen-year-old has nothing to really relate it to. I will take a chapter and I will pull out the important things and really cover those and cover the areas where you could get in trouble. Yet when I come in the next day, there are always five or six who didn't hear a word that I said. So there is a big difference in teaching adults from teaching young people.

We have had student evaluations at least once a year. I find those are real helpful and I look at those and analyze them. Every one of my students' evaluations says that I really know my subject and I am really enthusiastic about it; sometimes I go too fast and they can't absorb it. I feel definitely I am reaching a greater number of these younger people now than I was four or five years ago, but that is also related to work load. If you are doing sixteen contact hours, all you are saying is hey I got to get through this, you get it or you don't. You get real uptight, you are so busy, you don't know which end is up.

A boy came in the other day -- he is a B student in my accounting--and he came in with a drop slip. I said, "You know, I don't like to lose good students." He worked a lot of hours, he has to work, we have a lot of students like that. They are doing it on their own. The family can't even afford the tuition and so they are here working forty hours a week, trying to pay their whole load. So he said that he just could not do it, he did like it and he was doing well but he was spending an awful lot of time on it. Plus he really didn't like business, he wanted to go into the criminal justice program . So I said, "You have this aptitude for accounting,take the criminal justice but elect accounting. Pick up any magazine in the world and the FBI is in such dire need of people trained in criminal justice and accounting to get after the white-collar crime." So he said oh, well he would consider that. When I went down for my lunch, the criminal justice professor was there. He said,"You were right, if he has an aptitude for that, I'll tell him too."

They do keep coming in. We have some kind of a form where if someone comes into your office, he is supposed to sign his name and you are supposed to put the date and the hour and the purpose of the interview on this form. Well when a student comes into my office and wants to talk to me, before we do anything else I slap a form in front of him and tell him he has got to sign it. No way. I have a lot of them come in, they are having trouble with their wife or husband and they are so upset, they don't want to do that kind of thing. If they come back and say my forms are blank, I'll say too bad, I guess I didn't do a good job in advising. I do my work, if they don't like it, if they don't think that I am doing my work, tell me to leave. And the heck with pushing all those papers. We are professional people and I have a division chairman and if that division chairman verifies that I am doing my advising adequately and I have some kind of a record of them, so that is what I will do until someone tells me I have to do something else.

This job means a lot to me personally, outside of the fact that I am doing something that I enjoy . Even if you only really succeed with a handful of students; I can think of five or six students every year that I really felt that I had an impact on and what they will be doing in their future, and that is worth it. Teachers that figure that they've got to make it with one hundred and forty students, they are dreaming. Out of that one hundred and forty, seven is worth it to me. I can have an impact on their life, so I really do get satisfaction from that. Personally it means a lot. I love summers off, I am so busy in the school part of the year, working fifty-five or sixty hours a week, that in the summer I do basically nothing. I am a perpetual student. What degree do they give after a doctorate? I will go for that one too. I did not get any of the motivation for this from my parents or even my aunt, she sees no reason why anyone needs anything beyond high school. They go to school for twelve years, that is it, you can then do whatever you want. I say, "Wow, there is a hell of a lot to know in this world."

I live here with my aunt now. We will talk about what is on sale, what are we having for supper, and then we will watch television, we will talk about the news and politics and stuff. I usually come home about 4:30 and read the paper first and then we will have supper, then I watch the news and then I will go back and work correcting papers or something like that. I have an office upstairs .

No matter how high up you were in the management, still there is someone higher up than you making the decisions and you never know what you are going to be doing. Whereas in teaching, everything is under your control, you have the school calendar, you know when you have to do what, you know you are going to have this week free. It is under my control what I am doing and I can plan. Today it was nice out . I was out there from ten till one doing the gardening and it was a beautiful morning. I hope next Saturday it will be a southeast wind and I'll work out front, because I still have about eighty bulbs to put in. At night I can do what I have to do for class . Work up some exams.

In industry it was every week, week in and week out and summer, winter or fall. Even working there twenty-five years I had four weeks vacation. You know they are ready to hire me anytime I am ready to come back. I say, not yet, are you giving three months vacations yet? I used to think when I was there working so hard and saying what am I doing this for? To make some corporation rich. Whereas at school I am doing it to help the seven people that I can help each year really turn their life around and really maybe gain more out of life than they would have if I hadn't been there. So, no, I don't think I would go back even if they said we will hire you on a nine month contract. I think you can tell what it means to me to teach in a community college system because I wouldn't go back to that, even if they gave me the three months vacation. I have another ten years and then I will have my twenty years in teaching and I intend to retire early. I am not waiting until sixty-five or seventy or whenever the state gets ready to push you out. I will just enjoy life. And do a lot more reading. I am very active in the community, I was on the finance board , and active in my church--the missions committee and the education committee.

You remember that I told you, I said, "Hey, we got to get a union here." I would be working those same sixteen-seventeen contact hours if we hadn't had reduced work loads allowed for in the contract. They don't know how to manage. Now I am going to really reduce that work load to what it should be. I am much more successful, those fewer students that I have are learning more than when I had more students which is better for everyone. I feel like I have made gains.

Profile

ERIC HANSON

(Eric Hanson, in his forties, teaches psychology and sociology in a rural community college in Massachusetts. We interviewed him twice in his office and once in his home during the winter of 1980.)

Actually I came into community college teaching quite by accident. I started out in sociology, and my long term goal was to become a teacher of sociology in a four-year institution. I was doing my doctoral work at a university and teaching at a four year college. I never completed the doctoral program, and because I never completed the doctoral program I was ineligible for tenure at the college at which I was working. I started looking around for alternative institutions. I had no idea really what I was getting into. For me it was a happy accident. I didn't know very much about teaching in a community college, as a matter of a fact, the images that I worked with about community colleges were negative. When I was in graduate school seventy-five people were working on a doctoral program and only one of them had expressed interest in teaching in a community college. And I can remember thinking, "God, all he wants to do is teach in a community college; his level of aspirations in terms of the academic community is really not very high." The doctoral program expected us really to get our degrees, get into good institutions. The whole educational program that I was participating in didn't put community colleges on a very high level. I was quite happy teaching in a small four-year college. I thoroughly enjoyed it and didn't give teaching in a community college much thought at all until I had to actually look for a job.

I came from a blue-collar family. My father was a wallpaperer, painter, contractor. First of my generation to go to college. We were packed off to Sunday school every Sunday morning, something which I look at now and scowl; hated the experiences and can remember pretending to be sick so I wouldn't have to go and everything else. But I found that when I was a teen-ager what was happening was that the church, in that period of my life was meeting some real needs that I had--particularly the youth groups. The church picked up and recognized some talent and skills that I had. I was getting recognition. They would get me into teaching in the Sunday school program and would give me opportunities on Sunday morning in front of the public to read lessons. So I was constantly being reinforced by the church. These were some great people that I met and I was impressed. So my earliest goals were not for college teaching; my earliest goal really was to go into the ministry. It is something that just gradually really made more and more sense to me. But all the way up through seminary I had this nagging feeling, that I am not sure if this is what I really want to do with my life. But these people came along and they encouraged me to get involved and to grow and I just loved that attention and I blossomed. And I said I am going to go all the way and I sure tried. I looked to them for values, for reinforcement, for guidance, for models.

High school was a drag. I couldn't get excited about it. I remember my first day in high school. It was a dull, dreary day and a dull, dreary Latin class. I thought, "My God, I've got four years," and high school pretty much lived up to that. In high school I was interested in science, particularly in biology. But I didn't have a love for the place or the learning that I had when I got into college. Quite possibly if I wasn't going into the ministry, I wouldn't have gone to college. I had no encouragement from my family to go. I had certainly no finances to do it. I might have just gone to work for some insurance company in New York City , which I actually did for one semester before I started college. I graduated from high school in January and took a test for an insurance company. I got a great position there as a beginner and really an opportunity to grow with that company and then, six months later, I left to go to college.

I think my parents were proud of the idea that I wanted to go to college. My father experienced a lot of satisfaction through my going to college. I can remember he couldn't read. He just dropped out of school when he was just a kid. He was actually born here but he dropped out of school in the fourth or fifth grade. He started immediately making money ; he never really had an education. It was a constant embarrassment to him. He dropped out of the fourth grade and here is his son teaching college--he is pretty proud of me even today.

Being the first in my family to go to college I was kind of a pioneer. When I got there my first semester I kept getting C's in everything I turned in. I got so frustrated I sat down one weekend and said, "I am going to write a philosophy of writing papers. It was a really kind of a milestone because ever since that weekend I never got less than an A- on anything that I turned in. That determination you know, " Damn, I am getting C+ on things and I know I can do better than that," and I just sat down and wrote a whole philosophy of writing papers and term papers. In a way I was confronting all the doubts. I was confronting all the moments of doubt of myself, my college experience, what I was doing there, was I getting in over my head. I didn't have the money to stay in college and each semester it was grab as you can. I worked a couple of jobs switchboard, washed pots, and that sort of thing. I was washing pots that weekend for sixty-five cents an hour to get the tuition up. I kept looking for some fairy godmother who was going to say, "Here is the money, now don't ever wash pots." I was part of this group that was going to seminary ultimately. Most of us majored in psychology, sociology and philosophy of religion, so we were clustered in those courses. It was a really good group of people; some of them were extremely bright and very competitive. Some of the people I worked with at the time were really top scholars. I delivered academically and intellectually but I wouldn't have ever considered myself an intellect, at that time, although I really liked the academic aspects of it. Socially I was active in most of the groups. I never really considered myself intellectually gifted. I am a scholar but I am not an intellect.

I can remember one day in college standing in a classroom overlooking New York Harbor watching some ships come in thinking about being a teacher; and I was studying for some final exams at the time and I gave my lecture to some empty classrooms--all those seats nicely lined up--practicing and playing the role of being a teacher, it was always part of me. I can look back now--when I graduated from high school the dean of students wrote in my book, "To the little professor." At the time I was insulted because my image of what a professor was was kind of stodgy.

In my third year I took an internship, and I got a chance to get some practical experience in parishes and I found out what the ministry would be like and I came back even more unsure. Is this what I really want? At that time I probably would have gone to law school because I doubted whether I would go back to seminary at that point. I took the law school admittance exam and I applied to three law schools and was accepted to the University of Pennsylvania. I thought, well, when I got back, if the ministery isn't really for me I would go to law school. And I think that if I had had money I would have been a lawyer today. I came from a family that didn't have any money. I don't regret it now because I think I would have made a lousy lawyer. So I went back to seminary and finished it up. I got my degree and then during that last year I decided I really wasn't too sure about this whole thing.

I came within three weeks of ordination; I had the invitation for my ordination printed and everything else. I looked out the window of the church where I was going to be assigned, on a rainy morning, watching people walking into the church, and all of these doubts kept coming back and coming back. So I never finished. The hardest people to face were the early models who had encouraged me and helped me. After finishing seminary I went up to the university and picked up a master's degree. It was in social history. I thought I would get into teaching. I was going to get in the doctoral program. When I got there, I decided the thing I really wanted to do was to teach sociology.

NYU looked pretty attractive to me all the way around. I would be in the city, I would be close to family, I would have financial assistance to do it. Then I found that I didn't get a fellowship and was left out way on a limb . The only way I could survive was to work for the New York City Department of Social Services, doing social work through their program during the day, and in the late afternoon and evening taking courses. So I was able to finish most of my credits. I didn't like the social work job, I did it only for the money. It was beating me down emotionally, I couldn't handle the problems that people were bringing in. I just couldn't handle it, trying to work with clients and do graduate work. So I thought that if I am teaching, at least I will be enjoying what I am doing. I accepted a job at a college. The first year and a half at the college I commuted to New York twice a week to take graduate courses and to finish the doctorate program. I commuted and finished up my courses and started my dissertation and just never finished it. Whch is one of the major defeats of my life. Which is now why I am back in a doctoral program, saying that I am going to finish a doctorate.

When I went to NYU, this history prof was a really fine person, but I didn't sense that people gave a damn that I was there. Besides that I was working all day and I was emotionally drained. I was jumping hurdles, angrily jumping hurdles just to get the damn credentials at that point. The classes were much too large, the tuition was incredible, and they didn't care. Everyone was doing their research so they could get their full professorship and tenure. It was a good experience in that it was in New York City, but being at NYU was not a good experience. The last year that I was taking courses at NYU, I was taking statistics. I failed statistics. I went back and said, "Damn it, I am going to pass statistics." I worked with a tutor and spent hours every week working on statistics. One of my real accomplishments in graduate school was getting a B in statistics.

I equate the small liberal arts college experience with my undergraduate experience. In my life those are two periods that were really very good experiences. But I got kicked out of that college because I didn't finish my degree. I accepted that. It was my fault. I knew that was part of the agreement. I had not delivered, so I never blamed them .

So I came here. My first year of teaching in a community college was a disaster. I had to learn what community college was all about. I didn't understand it. What I knew of community colleges I didn't like. I viewed it as a kind of going down. You know, I wouldn't brag to people that I am going to teach in a community college. Some of the people over there at the four-year college felt sorry for me because I was leaving a good four-year college and going to a community college and there was this clear perception I was really going down. Even today when I go back to the college which I periodically do, I meet people and they say, "How are you making out over there," this real sense as if I am in a foreign country. They don't even have the contact with the community college that's in their own town because it is a community college and that is like high school.

I teach twelve hours. I am teaching two introductory psych classes, Psychology of Human Behavior, and two introductory sociology classes. I am in the Behavioral Sciences Department and I am a bridge person between Psych and Soc. When I first started teaching here the classes were pretty large, and I used to have sixty-five people in the introductory classes. I always felt a sense of frustration there, by just lecturing and students vomiting back information, assuming this was an educational process. I have switched my whole approach now. I have two psych classes and we meet in a room lined with couches rather than the traditional classroom. We try to have much more discussion although it tends to be still me focusing on a particular subject, kicking around ideas. It is still not as discussion-oriented as I want it to be. The major problem I constantly faced is, how can you have discussion if the students have not prepared the material? I have toyed with all kinds of techniques and approaches trying to get students to prepare, to read the material. I find myself still coming in with the basic concepts and telling them things, and doing things, and focusing on things that I wish they had prepared. There is always a handful of people who do read and keep us going, but the great majority don't seem to be doing it. I was hoping we could do much more sophisticated things. How do I get them to read, how do I get them to come prepared? I was even going to say we are going to have a quiz every single period so that people will read, and then I said, "Oh, my God, I am going to become a policeman, a bookkeeper, that is even going to be worse."

When I was teaching at the four-year college and I would ask them to read this material, I would assume that sixty to seventy percent actually had read the material, just on the feedback and the responses I got. Not only that, I would put things on reserve in the library, journals, background articles, ask them to read and they would turn in all sorts of material that they had read. I was dealing with a much more motivated population and a population that was able to work independently. When I came here, what I found was that I had to do much more in the way of encouraging, structuring, spoon-feeding, reinforcing, all the way along the line in order to get people to work. They are basically very different student populations. The four-year college students were bright, they were motivated, encouraged by their families to go, perhaps even pressured and expected to do well. They expected that education would be important in their lives. We did not work there with an open-door policy. With the open-door policy we have, many more people are not only less motivated--less committed, less sure where they are going and what college is all about--they have traditionally less support from their families to go, less value in education per se, simply a very very different population. We are getting a lot of middle-aged people, particularly females, whose kids have gone off to school. They are some of the most motivated people that I have. So you have bright highly motivated people and you have confused people who actually hate college who are sitting there in the classroom.

Having just gone through finals I was a little bit upset because I failed seven people in Psychology. I said there is no way they should fail a course in Psychology, with all these possible techniques to help them get through. And yet there were still that number of people at the end of the semester who had failed all the tests. I asked them to withdraw from the course if they were not going to put in some time to get through. They still stayed in the course and the last week in the semester, I looked at the book. They had not done a single thing to help themselves, failed every single test and still they stayed in the course expecting to get through. I can't force people to learn. I will try to motivate, try to encourage, try to support, but if people choose not to get involved in the process, I am no longer going to get upset about it. I still feel a tremendous sense of remorse and guilt about it because no one likes to be giving out F's; and I rationalize and say they have earned it, and I still feel badly about it.

In the beginning I was terribly upset. I really blamed myself. My first year here was an absolute disaster. I came and tried to teach like I was teaching at the four-year college and I was absolutely horrified by the difference, by the performance in the classroom, the tests. I couldn't believe the papers that students turned in. I had to sit down and take a look at what I was doing in order for me to survive in the classroom. To attempt to reach them, I had to restructure things. I had to really focus much more on trying to help them get through, to focus the materials so that they clearly understood, to re-emphasize, to give study guides. Before I would just say, "Okay, we are talking about this idea, these are the basic concepts, this is what we are doing and you are on your own. I am here if you want me but I am not going to spoon-feed you everything," and it didn't work. I was trying to teach with that kind of approach where I expected them to be bright, motivated, committed, hard working, and they simply weren't. They weren't doing the work.

I tried to talk to them to find out what is going on. What I sensed from the conversation was they really don't know why they are here, they don't know what they are doing here. They don't have a viable alternative. This is as good as anything else that is available in their lives at this time. At least they have a status of being a college student in the community; that gives them some sort of legitimacy. The incredible problems the students have here and the desperate urge they have for someone to help--just because I have taught a course in psychology, people were coming and assuming that this is the person to go to to talk. So many of the students would come with horrendous problems. I started talking with them and just felt completely frustrated. A very frequent story is, "I didn't do well on the test." "Well why aren't you doing well?" "Well I have a lot of family problems, and I don't have the time to study," and all of a sudden the floodgate is open. We are getting middle-aged women who are coming back. A lot of them are experiencing change and they are changing as a person. The husband resents them coming to school; kids resent them coming to school, kids don't want them leaving in the morning before they go off to school, or things like packing lunch for your husband becomes a big deal. For years the wife has been preparing the lunch for the husband. All of a sudden she is going off to school and doesn't have time to prepare lunch and lunch becomes an issue for a marital crisis. One woman said to me, "If I knew what my life was going to be like coming to this community college, I would never have come."

My goal is to finally start doing some writing and doing some publishing just for me. There is no reward, incentive, for doing it at all. As a matter of fact I expect that it might be the reverse. They don't want us doing research because the more involved in research, the less time we have available for students. It is ironical because when I was at the four-year college it was : what research are you doing, what are you involved in, are you publishing? I come here and I am sneaking off to the library. I am hoarding time so that I can work on some of the projects that I am interested in. In the beginning I was in a state of shock adjusting to conditions at the community college. I was very unhappy my first year or two. During the course of that period I realized what was happening, that I was trying to force my students to bend and to meet the expectations that I had rather than me taking a look at where I was and what was happening and trying to sense what kind of institution it was, what kind of students I was working with. I do feel now I am doing a pretty decent job in the classroom. I do feel I reach a lot of students. I do feel that the community college system is successful at what it is trying to do and in many ways we represent, for a lot of our students, opportunities they would never have had otherwise. I have grown from resenting this whole process to someone who on occasion is quite prideful of the accomplishments that we have made. But I keep asking myself, am I rationalizing? What would I rather be doing? And if I answered that honestly, I would really like to be teaching at a good four-year private college with really highly motivated, bright students, and be able to do some research, all of those grand academic things. But I am not going to be able to do that.

I am teaching, I get enough satisfaction out of doing that, I feel content, I consider myself fortunate in teaching at a place like this community college. I don't apologize for it. Particularly in the summer, I don't teach at all during the summers. I would rather teach in the evening and full-time during the year and keep the summers entirely for something quite different. This summer I will be working on some research, writing some articles on utopian communities.

I am afraid in a number of areas that the community college is anti-intellectual. It wants teachers who are going to be friends who are going to be available, and I think that is good but I think that we have to deliver more. I would like to see us get more intellectually concerned, go back to school, get involved in research projects, get involved in other areas that are going to provide some intellectual ferment in our lives so that the students will benefit.

Profile

JOSEPH RYAN

(Joseph Ryan, a man in his fifties, is a professor of criminal justice at a community college in a town in Massachusetts. We interviewed him twice in his office and once at his home in the summer of 1980.)

I spent twenty-one years in police work in New York City prior to becoming a community college teacher. While I was in police work I got a master's degree in public administration, and because of that I was offered positions within the department that were instructional and training in nature. As I approached retirement I had a choice to make whether I wanted to stay in police work or whether I would like to engage in educating people about criminal justice and law enforcement in this country. I had refused a position at a university in their criminal justice program. Two or three weeks later I was offered a position where I am now. I really narrowed myself down to areas of the country that I would be interested in going to. And this happened to be one of them. A lot of family considerations went into actually taking this job as opposed to the other one. Even though the other one was a much higher paying job--it appeared to have much more of a future than this one--but there were other considerations.

I went to Catholic schools all my life. The ones I went to were very sports-oriented. We had Christian brothers teaching. They were all young guys who were sports-oriented so I got introduced to organized football, organized baseball, basketball, track. I have always been a church-goer, still am. I don't necessarily agree with their philosophies today but I am part of that Irish-Catholic upbringing, it just stuck with me.

I was born in New Hampshire. My folks went to New York when I was two. And we lived in Manhattan off Central Park for a couple of years and then moved to Bronx by Yankee Stadium. My father was a clothing salesman. We used to go back and forth to the country quite often. Even as a kid, seven or eight, I didn't want to go back to New York. I wanted to stay with my aunts and uncles. We never owned our own home in New York, we always rented. As a small child it was very impressive to me to just have green and your own house. My mother and father would go back to New York and I would spend the summer with my cousin . I had my older brother, and my cousins were two boys the same age as us.

I didn't have any problem with school. My marks were always good. I didn't overwork myself. Because we lived in the Bronx I had to go down to 61st Street and Manhattan to school; it was an hour fifteen minutes on the train,the walk and all. I think the whole experience was invaluable. If I did something wrong I expected to get whatever was coming to me, and when the bell rang at three o'clock it was all forgotten. The same guy that took you to task was now outside coaching you basketball, with no animosity. Their concern for us taught me a lot, somehow you had this feeling that you were amongst the chosen few or something. You didn't have any choices. They told you what you were going to take and you took it. They designed your curriculum for you. I got out of high school in 1943.

My father, he never was out of work in the depression. I never felt that we were poor. We always had food on the table, we always had a nice home. And no problems with money. Of course the philosophy of my folks was a little different than it might be today. You couldn't get money out of them as easy as maybe my kids can get it out of me today. I can remember asking for a nickel and you get such a long story to go with it that it was hardly worth asking. You know, you worked for your money and you didn't waste it. We almost always had a car, which was not true of most families that I was acquainted with.

Had there not been a war, no question in my mind, I never would have attended college. It was just never a topic in my family. My folks were not familiar with it. And this was true of all my friends, an understanding that if you didn't have money you didn't go to college. I had no real ambitions to go to college. I didn't expect to go. The fact that there was a war and the fact that you were thinking about whether or not to go into the service when you graduated, that had a lot to do with it. In August of 1943 I went into the Navy. I spent about fourteen days on the water. That is all. I was shipped to the West Coast, ended up in Hawaii in a naval communications center. The only ship I was on was to get there and back. We all got shipped to the West Coast and we all got shipped to Hawaii and we went into what they called receiving barracks at that time. You just waited for them then to start parceling you out to whatever came along. Some guys would go to cruisers, some guys to whatever was in the harbor at the time. They didn't tell you where you were going. One morning they called off nine of us and they gave one of us a brown folder that was sealed, I can remember, and it said RTS-41. And they told us to climb in the back of the truck. We all climbed in the back of the truck and they started off. We were all sitting there saying, "Where are we going?" Ended up in the radio station that was twenty-six miles from Honolulu. And that is where I spent the next year and a half, two years. Clean sheets, good food, and access to Waikiki Beach. So it wasn't a bad experience. You know, luck of the draw. Guys were sent to Midway, guys were sent all over the place. I just happened to go up there.

This is where I met the individual that got me interested in physical education. He had completed one year at a state university, he was a phys ed major. I don't think up until then I really knew what I wanted to do. Of all reasons to go to college, this appeared to me to be interesting. There was the opportunity under the G.I. Bill to get an education. It was an opportunity to do something that I probably hadn't expected to do three years before. And I was a little older, a little bit smarter, I guess. When I got out of the service and I went to college, I lived on campus one year and off campus two years. I went summers so I got out in three years. Phys ed is not the big, dumb football player type of thing. It was a demanding curriculum. In addition to the recreational and phys ed courses the science demands were quite heavy. I didn't want to go into the teaching profession. I had made up my mind that didn't interest me. I never even applied for a teaching job anyplace. My student teaching I found boring. I didn't want to teach kids seventeen, sixteen, fifteen years old.

I don't remember ever discussing college with my folks, what I should study, what I should do. When I decided to go it was just go. No real lengthy discussions about my future. The work ethic was probably more important at that time . My father helped me as much as he could. Had I decided to go to work, that would have been perfectly acceptable.

After college I took a job with an insurance company for a year and a half. I guess the word would be I was floundering. Somebody offered me a job in a Wall Street brokerage house. And I said, "Okay, let me try that." And I stayed for three years or so. That's when the police interest started . I applied and it took two years by the time everything was worked out. So when the job was offered to me I had a choice to make again. I decided to take the police department and get out of Wall Street. People were telling me , "Hey, you go into police work, you are gonna have it made. You can call your shots." Because at that time people with degrees were at a minimum in police work. I met my wife when I was in Wall Street. We got married after I had started the police job.

Somebody told me that in the police department there was a good opportunity to do a lot for and with youth in New York City. As circumstances often dictate, I never did get into the juvenile aid bureau. I ended up being a training coordinator in a precinct in New York. When I made lieutenant I ended up in the research, planning, and development unit at the police department. I closed out my career as a commanding officer of a planning and research unit.

I had a decision to make five years ago whether I wanted to stay in police work, or whether I wanted to take a chance and enter a new profession, which I really did not have that much experience in. I had taught one semester as an adjunct professor in a criminal justice program. But that was the only real experience as a teacher that I had outside of training jobs in the police department. So there was an element of apprehension on my part when I decided to do it. It was just a very complex series of events that finally ended up with me becoming a teacher. I had the qualifications to do that. I didn't have the qualifications to become an airline pilot or the qualifications to become something else. I never thought of pursuing a job in another field. I was going to retire, I was going to retire hopefully into a teaching job in a criminal justice program someplace. I never thought of going into General Motors as a middle management person or something like that.

The first year, because of that being new to the profession, I really don't think I ever worked as hard in my life. Every night I used to have to sit down and work hours and hours, because I was reluctant to go into class the next day ill-prepared. Making up exams and all these things were all new to me. It was a very difficult first year, wondering whether I did make the right choice at times. What I wanted out of it was to take my family to a new location, someplace I would rather spend the rest of my life in and expose them to something else besides New York City.

With an occupational program like ours there is a lot of interaction with students. The students are always there. We see them two or three hours every day in classes, we run the whole program between two people. So the relationships we build up with the students are probably different than that built up by, say, the liberal arts people. We get to know them all, some of them better than others. Often we try to help them in many ways, not only in their school work. This gives me a lot of satisfaction--to see them come in at eighteen years old and leave at twenty and have progressed. Not all of them. Some of them, I would like to throw out. I have found some of it disillusioning. I don't know whether it is the community college system, but the amount of people that are really not prepared for college level work, I find that disillusioning. That is probably because of my background. I went to Catholic high schools and Catholic grammar schools and you made the grade or they threw you out, period. When I see these kids coming out of high school today, some of them can't write as well as my fourteen-year-old daughter, I say there is something wrong. And it is not at our level. It is someplace else.

The students will stop in to talk when they get a free period. We will give advice, we don't have a placement service but we keep abreast of what is going on in the field. We try to get information and pass it on to those that are interested and even push some of them. Say, "Go take the test, it doesn't cost you anything, go take it." At graduation several of the students will come and make sure that they bring their mother and father. You can see that they go home and talk about you because the folks will be saying, "Well, so you are the guy we have been hearing about for two years." That is good. They have some respect for us and what we are trying to do and I find that rewarding. Because of my background I am equipped to do that. I can take a course and teach them criminal investigation, but I can also tell them what it is really all about. Your textbooks won't give them that.

I still don't know how to measure what a good job is in this profession. If you talk about giving exams and giving papers to write and grading them , I am not a great believer in A-B-C-D and that type of evaluation of academic pursuits. But I am not probably qualified to argue it either. I am not so sure I wouldn't just like a pass/fail type of thing. In evaluating ten-or fifteen-page papers, I will not even go to an A-B-C-D means of marking them. I refuse to do it. I give them either an exceptional paper, an acceptable paper, or a not acceptable paper. They more or less, at least in our institution, they more or less leave you alone. You get a little supervision relative to classes but not anything that you can't handle. They let you treat the topics the way you want and I think that's great. I set goals for each one of my courses, what I want to get across to them, what I hope they get by the time this is over. You get days where somehow things just don't seem to go right.

So in addition to teaching specific material, I'm really concerned about improving the individual, his ability to stand up in front of the class, his ability to ask questions. You know there are other things besides learning what the penal code says about homicide, or something like that, so I try to get them involved. I'm a great one for making up three-man, four-man teams and give them a project and say, "Next Wednesday you'll get up in front of the class and present this. I'll tell you what I think about your presentation and what material you missed which you should have emphasized and what you didn't emphasize." Sometimes I'll let them submit questions for the exams on the material that they have; and if I like them, I'll accept them and put them in. I believe in getting them involved, if I possibly can. I think if they're enjoying the course, they become inquisitive. And if they become inquisitive, that shows me that they're enjoying it and they are looking beyond what the textbook says. I think when I first came I was lecturing. I learned very quickly that you are not getting any feedback here, you don't know whether you are getting anything across or not. They are sitting there, you are talking and when it is finished you are leaving and you give them a quiz in four weeks and they pass it or flunk it. But are they enjoying the course? You don't even know that.

The head of my department, we are good friends. But I still chastise him for what he did to me that first year when I was hired. My first year he gave me four separate preparations. I had never taught before and I thought that was not unusual. He told me this is what you are going to teach next fall. One, two, three, four . And I thought nothing of it. But after being here a while I realized that nobody teaches four separate preparations. To this day I tell him it was tough enough as it was and you gave me four separate preparations. Now it's a blessing. I went through the toughest time right away. I guess he operates from the philosophy of jump in and tread water. He helped me any time I wanted help. But he wasn't the type to sit around and watch me do everything. He is younger, less experienced in police work, but much more experienced in the teaching profession. It worked out well for us.

As you can see from my background, I have spent all my life in the chain-of-command type of positions. The military and the police department. So I look at the administration in the college the same way. My department chairman is my boss; we have a division chairman, upstairs we have the deans. So because of my training and background I will tell my immediate department chairman I am not going to go over his head. I am not going to let anything go upstairs that he is not going to see first. I would not do that to him. Because that is the way I have been trained. You have got your division and then you have got your deans, then you got the president. A chain of command, but at a community college it is not so obvious. Because I know the deans as well as the department chairman. I see them and we talk. They are not removed from us . But there is a chain of command here and I don't believe in violating it.

I detest bureaucracies and all they imply. I don't like to see a lot of effort put into things that have very little chance of being productive. I see an awful lot of wasted effort in academia. A lot of discussion, a lot of talk for the sake of talking. I am probably wrong, but when I see them start organizing-- this is just an example-- search committees for a position, they waste a year and a half in the search committee. I wasn't brought up that way. Personally I think I could do it myself, and save a hell of a lot of time. If I were looking to fill a position for somebody to be a faculty member in our department, I don't need any search committee. Let me pick the guy I want. And if he is not productive, then come after me. They keep creating jobs and they make work for themselves. You could disregard the whole thing and nobody would miss it. I see a little of that. Not that it didn't exist in the police department, because it did.

I sat on a couple of committees in the beginning and I didn't even know what was going on. I didn't even know what they were talking about half the time. Now I am the local treasurer for the union. I am much more informed than I was in the first year, but I don't feel I have anything to offer to the nursing department or to the engineering department relative to their curriculum. I don't think that most of them have anything to offer relative to our program. So I am not one to sit there quietly if I have something that I can contribute. By the same token, if I figure that I'm out of my field, I'll just sit there and listen because I am a great believer in the fact that you can't learn when that mouth is going. You know, this is a second career for me. Tremendous ambitions in this field, I don't have them. My nature demands that I do a good job if I can, I want to advance as well as I can, but it's not critical anymore. I'm fifty-four years old, I'm retired from one job, my family's almost grown. My nature will not let me do less than I possibly can. But I have no goals or ambitions to be a leader in the community college system.

I don't think people from the humanities division have ever asked me anything about school administration or anything relative to the institution. I don't think they are interested in what my opinions are. I don't go ask them what their opinions are about the criminal justice system either. I'm not being critical of them. It's just that being in an occupational program, other elements of the institution may or may not be interested in what we are doing. Being it is an occupational program, it is not viewed as we always viewed higher education. In other words, an occupational program could, if you didn't watch it, become a training program. I don't think those involved in traditional education view the occupational programs as being equivalent to what they are engaged in. Their definition of higher education would not possibly include the occupational programs as being the same. You know, higher education, even to me as a youngster, meant more than an occupational program. You know, not knowing that much about it, but I am sure, when I thought about higher education, I thought of the liberal arts type of approach rather than an occupational program. I think there is some difference there. Part of the problem that exists with an occupational program is to make sure that it doesn't become a training program. I don't feel that some who engage in liberal arts education really feel an occupational program is higher education. And again, I am not taking sides. I can understand where they are coming from.

College work is a problem for some of our students. I think some are not motivated. Don't even care if they are here or not. They have no other place to be. Watching Kojak on TV and a few other things made criminal justice sound interesting. Daddy said, "Why don't you go to college." I sympathize with the ones who are academically deficient. I think that maybe we can do something for them. So I don't mean to say they should be thrown out. I wish we had a better quality student coming in then we have. But I don't say throw the poor guy out that is academically deficient. I would try to help him as much as we can, and maybe that is what community college education is all about. Maybe by the time two years are over, maybe we have motivated them to the extent that they want to get into the system. I don't know. But I often say that they are just here because they have no other better place to be.

In terms of a second career, I entered it with a lot of apprehension naturally. I've done a lot of learning since I have been in it. I came here, I am going to be a teacher, I am going to be the best teacher I can possibly be. And that was my goal when I came here. I don't want it to sound like I am not interested in my own welfare. I would be upset if I saw people get promoted that I considered didn't do a good job. I have those normal aspirations that anybody has. It is just that maybe they aren't as critical to somebody that is retired and has a pension and is in the age bracket that I am in. A lot of people look at retired people and a second career, and maybe think I am coasting. But that is not my intention whatsoever. I am going to do the best I can with it. The fact that I have another source of income enters into it because it's necessary, because I couldn't live on this salary, but it doesn't enter into my performance or my involvement in this particular program here.

As far as my family is concerned, it meant a complete change for them, a totally new experience. I think the frustrations that they suffered as a result of the move are going to stand them all in good stead. I wanted to introduce them to a different type of life and I think this accomplished that. There was an element of a gamble involved . And I was giving up a good job. I just couldn't see going to my grave and saying, "Joe, you never tried it."

I want to be recognized, I want to be rewarded. I think when you are older and you make the change, it kind of waters down the possibilities--unless you go from a retired position into administrative responsibility. I started as a teacher in the criminal justice field, not as an administrator. I wanted to be an instructor in the field that I am most familiar with. I had a gut feeling that the whole change would be beneficial both to me and to my family.

Occupational programs are viewed by your traditional educators as less than what they might want them to be. And I think this will persist as long as you and I are on this earth, if not longer. They give us a responsibility. We do the best we can. We don't bother anybody. We are not running upstairs with administrative problems all the time. They hardly know we exist. Because we do a good job, a satisfactory job. We have a good enrollment. We just don't interact with top administration. Again, it's the nature of the beast. I think the police profession does have an impact on anybody's personality. You spend twenty-one years where you are always singled out if you are in uniform. You are very happy those times that you can get out of uniform without everybody knowing that you are a cop. And so I like this idea of just doing my job and not rocking the boat or going upstairs with problems. So we have problems, nobody knows about them. In addition to learning how to teach a class, seeing the relationships that exist, and conflicts, realizing it isn't all one big happy family in a college.

There is a sense of isolation about occupational programs and probably more so with the criminal justice program. Because there are people that I don't think you would find in many other occupations. Nobody dislikes people in a nursing profession. Nobody dislikes people who are taking early childhood, guidance, or recreation. But there are people with built-in animosity towards the police profession. But I don't let these things really bother me. This has been five years of almost continual learning about a lot of things that I can't put down on paper, we can't even discuss, but there is always something new. There is always something you can get yourself involved in. What more do you want out of life? I still feel some isolation being in an occupational program, and probably it happens to be criminal justice besides. Which may make it worse, in some cases. But I don't feel that cohesiveness. I feel a very strong cohesiveness with those people teaching in the criminal justice profession at other institutions. I belong to the State Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, and the Eastern Conference Criminal Justice Educators. I feel strongly about those people. But that's understandable because of where I come from. But I don't get a sense here of we're all college teachers, like we are all police officers, regardless of rank. I don't know if it's here or not to get, but I don't get that.

I have a natural ego that does aspire to being recognized naturally and being advanced like anybody else is being advanced in the system. Forget the monetary gains. Just the idea of being recognized. Naturally I still have that. And if I was to be overlooked because of attitudes about a second career, I would be very upset about that. I expect to be evaluated on my merits. I entered it with a lot of apprehension, naturally; I've done a lot of learning since I've been in it. I give it my best shot and I get a lot of gratification out of doing it. I don't want to mislead you when I say I have no aspiring ambitions. I don't want to be locked into one position and ignored for promotions or recognitions of the job that I do and I'm looking for pay increases like the next fellow.

Commentary

With characteristic clarity Edith Powell describes the interaction with her initial high school advisor, a person who quickly assigns Powell the commercial track of courses. Powell says there was no possibility of family intervention: neither her mother or father had gone to college or knew about opportunities for college based on earlier school performance. School and family cooperated in assuming that without money one didn't expect to enroll in or even fantasize the possibility of a college preparatory curriculum for oneself. So while Powell does not like much of her commercial curriculum and recalls a zest for writing and history, high school's meaning is a vocational one for her. Her excelling in her assigned "field" leads her accounting teacher to urge a long-term sense of job opportunity when she has the choice between the phone company and an expanding restaurant chain. His sense of job opportunity being connected to higher education leads Powell to take the first steps in what will prove to be a career, in part, as a life-long learner. Already in high school she plays the truant on the routine busy-work side of the commercial curriculum, the typing and office skills components. Powell seeks out, knows she wants, and can do well at intellectually more demanding and consequential subject matter. So as a senior she shows that, while having been "technically trained," she already has made it to the top of her area, accounting, as well as sustained an intellectual curiosity and initiative which will serve her well in her pursuit of the bachelor's and master's degrees. Also to be noted here is the mental sustenance one is provided with if, at an early age, one becomes an avid reader. This factor, evident in many other profiles, is underscored yet again by this participant's early experience in school and family life.

Why does Edith Powell leave the business world at what appears to be the peak of her career? She is most emphatic about her reasons. She is not dissatisfied with her social life there, in fact she maintains close ties to people who worked with her over those years. And she is just now making the salary she had when she left the company. She says not a word of negative comment about the company itself, which advanced her rapidly and appeared exceptional in its non-sexist job practices. This young woman who had never traveled beyond her local environment rises quickly, travels around the country, becomes a sought-after speaker, assumes more leadership, trains her replacements, supervises her subordinates, grows professionally with what seems to be a happy combination of satisfaction and recognition. For a person of her education and background, she advanced well and enjoyed each stage; she worked in the computerization of the business accounting field.

And yet she was scarcely "contained" in or by her company job: she remained a student, going to school part-time, earning a bachelor's and a master's degree. She says she planned a second career, and she made careful inquiries at her choice of community colleges. When the time came, she was both well-prepared and willing to move. By the time she is interviewed, Edith Powell is about half-way through her second career. She has retirement in view, knows what she will do, how she will enjoy it. What she celebrates in her teaching career is connected to what she wanted when she left the company: greater autonomy, greater time off. Even if she were offered her old job back with three months vacation, she says she still would not take it back.

But that Powell considers it at all is an indication of the vantage point she has on her current work. While in the company, she saw the hierarchy from top to bottom and evidently saw herself settling for some niche in the upper echelons of middle management, always having a boss. As a teacher at the community college she is assertive and affirmative about her relative autonomy. In spite of a hectic schedule, she applauds the gains the union has made, a union for which she was an early advocate. For Edith Powell the complement to such autonomy is a confident skepticism about the leadership of the college, a sense that unlike the efficiency and hierarchy of business, the community college is not well-governed, not coherent or thoughtful in its policies. In fact, it is a workplace where a less confident person would be much more susceptible to insecurity and debilitation. Powell's age, previous experience, and her own sense of power and opportunity enable her to maintain both detachment from the institution and enthusiasm for her particular work.

Powell also left business because the bottom line of her work there was "to make the corporation rich." Here at the community college she engages in her work in such a way that the large numbers of struggling and unmotivated students--mostly young, inexperienced, with nothing "to relate their studies to"--receive her attention and guidance but without the undermining self-doubt often expressed by other participants in this study. Edith Powell's training in business and her outlook on life more generally provide her with a vision that looks at the select few, "the six or seven," which at any one time are taking maximum advantage of what Powell has to offer. The others, too often not yet making a break from high school routines , are upset at "the ambiguity of things." So no matter how effective Powell's pedagogy can be, the students' motivation and interest make for spotty performance. Powell contrasts this with the motivation of those in business being trained in special sessions, the payoff for their learning immediate and consequential to them. It is the returning older students, often women, who come closest to pursuing their education with an analogous sense of urgency and motivation. Powell's story of the young male who wants to drop accounting because his job and interest in another field are conflicting with the course, shows how she as a teacher/advisor responds to students (so many work and fold their course work into heavy work routines). She knows that simply dropping the course is a setback to opportunities the student cannot see.

When Powell came to the community college, therefore, one basic ingredient in that move was her belief that she would indeed be like the person she was in high school, playful in a serious way, perpetually curious, and free to pursue her own life in a way not "sold" to the company. At the college now she assesses her relative success and is pleased with her work as a whole. The prevailing structure of the institution--from over-use of part-time instructors to the paper-pushing accounting sheets for individual advising sessions--gives her pause and gives her occasions for active resistance. Her words are telling on the matter of the advising forms: she makes it clear that such a "game" is beneath her and if the powers that be don't like it, they can fire her. In speaking in such a way Powell indicates both her own authority in the institution and feelings just the opposite of one who is "trapped." Knowing she is doing good work, she anticipates that the bureaucracy can be ignored with no serious consequence for herself.

So while Powell anticipates her next step to be early retirement, she gives every sign of knowing that there are structural deficiencies in the organization and operation of the college over which she has some control but which exist as the larger context with regard to promotion, regulations on class size, budgets for part-timers, entrenched patterns of organized inertia. Powell judges all this to mean "they don't know how to manage." The resource allocation committee on which she serves addresses these issues, and Powell's voice is hardly a defeatist one. She talks about "making gains" in a way which implies she has seen and worked for improvements at the college, that progress has been made in the area of equitable teaching loads which will enable her and her students to do better work and gain more satisfaction from work well done.

Edith Powell, an individualistic woman with a strong sense of her "community," works now at the community college in a way which draws on the union perspective of her working-class father and on the management experiences of her previus career. She knows that it is not aptitude or ability but motivation and interest which keep her predominantly young students from greater achievement. Her profile helps raise the question of the efficacy of vocational training where students are simply not experienced enough to invest in an occupational field, often switch fields, their choices growing out of complex interactions between their own past schooling and expectations about what they can or cannot do in the future. Powell more than once alludes to that special ingredient, "motivation," most often a correlative to a student's wanting something more from life and looking to an educational program to get himself or herself to a new and better place. As long as Powell has the six or seven who have put themselves on that "track," she feels justified and satisfied in her job.

Somewhat younger than Edith Powell, Eric Hanson struggles to affirm even a part of his work, and the portrait as a whole touches on themes other faculty and staff have addressed: problems in teaching, the students' commitment to an educational process, the imposed definition of the college which overpopulates classrooms and thwarts the most vital of non-teaching initiatives for faculty--research. Hanson recognizes the necessity of research for a faculty's continuing vitality and sense of worth. While he may feel isolated and alone with such a concern, in fact he joins a chorus of voices in this study describing the absence of research as an integral part of community college work life.

Hanson says he is lucky to be there, having lost his previous job because he did not "deliver," he did not complete his dissertation. Hanson's vision of himself has a special poignancy in that he comes to community college work not in the euphoric era of the sixties when his institution was celebrated as a sort of regional flagship campus for transferring students to four-year schools. He arrives on the scene when faculty are being asked to "retool" and teach new subjects, when the economy is contracting and more attention and publicity is going to a careerist emphasis at the college. On a campus that prides itself on an independent-minded and collegial faculty, Eric Hanson can only reflect on how little the two- and four-year schools share. He is deeply concerned about the students: for their inattention, lack of initiative, their lack of caring, their refusal to engage in class discussion, the silent indifference in the face of Hanson's intensified desire to succeed as best he can in a new situation where his old academic customs will not find a place to be shared. He wants to discuss ideas, knows that the material demands an active response, and cannot get many of his students to do the minimum: read the book. He states that at the four-year school it was easy to teach: at the community college it is hard, decidedly hard. Hanson's sympathies for the returning women also are part of a chorus of confident affirmation about them. (As the suceeding chapter indicates, the phenomenon of returning women students in the community college raises questions which go to the heart of this study.)

Hanson's move to the community college confronted him with a struggle. The move "down" to the community college has worked out because his family and he wanted to stay in that particular part of the country. But Hanson registers directly his frustration with his community college experience when he bluntly admits he would rather be teaching at a good, private, four-year college.

Hanson takes full responsibility for not having completed his degree. Yet he also makes clear in the way he describes his graduate study that it was a grind, that he developed a lot of anger toward the professors who were into their advanced scholarship to the detriment of their students. In this context of unresolved tensions, a full-time teaching job, family responsibilities, the years slipped by and Eric Hanson's tenure decision was a negative one. There are a few other stories in this collection of profiles concerning the loss of a job and its consequences. Eric Hanson seemed resisting and accomodating at the same time to the realities of the community college where he has to change the level he teaches on, has to "lead" his classes far more than he wants to or knows is educationally sound.

A note of apprehensiveness pervades much of Hanson's account of what it is like to work in a community college, so he can sound negative about his teaching. While there are always "a handful of people who read and keep us going," Hanson is nearly overwhelmed by accounts he gets from students about their problems at home, with work, in relationships. Such awareness complicates his negativism about the realities of teaching in a community college, but he is still left trying to establish a genuine intellectual engagement with his students, or any concentration on ideas themselves. Hanson sounds like a teacher whose sense of obligation, of "delivering" is beyond what can be realized in the setting in which he works. Edith Powell in her accounting and management courses can recognize that the struggling eighteen-year-old often doesn't have anything "to relate to" in terms of the skill or concept she's teaching. This recognition leads her not toward self-blame, self-doubt but to doing the best she can and evaluating her own productivity not in terms of groups but individuals.

No matter how secular the work conditions of these three participants' lives, their portraits reflect the importance of a religious tradition which begins with childhood and continues into the present. For Hanson it was his church in his uncertain adolescent years which gave him some self-confidence and provided a basis for the "breaking away" from his working-class home life. For Powell, church and family life make an unbroken chain; to this day religious affiliation remains a vital part of her life, her sense of self grounded in that community. Hanson's painful second "breaking away" from the calling of the ministry clearly left scars, but his current research interest in religious utopian communities is a means for him to integrate past and present. For Ryan religion meant Catholic schooling: the discipline, the curriculum, the camaraderie. He remains an "Irish Catholic" .

While our commentaries in this study have emphasized factors of gender, class, and race, we also note the ways that religion has played a role in the formative stages and later years of the participants. Most dramatically, Hanson's college years are imbued with a sense of personal achievement, intellectual excitement, and religious vocational commitment that throws into relief the absence of "delivering" attached to both his four-year and two-year college teaching careers. In sharp contrast to Hanson, Powell's religious upbringing implies a division and even antagonism between religion and education: her family still questions her about her never ceasing to be a student. Schooling represents for them a denial of personal freedom. Only in this regard, however, do we sense that Powell is a stranger to them, and she has become a mentor of sorts to her sister's children. Ryan's portrait shows the effects of the Irish-Catholic heritage of anti-intellectualism. It is only in the "moratorium" of the service years that a buddy influences him to think of higher education.

Eric Hanson is teaching in the liberal arts. The power of ideas and the intellectual life moved him deeply as an undergraduate. At that time his aspirations were for a life as a minister, a leader in the union of religious and intellectual traditions. Going to graduate school, Hanson converted his sense of mission to that of an educator in higher education, his aspirations of university work contrasting with the lonely fellow student whom Hanson judged then as having low aspirations because he was thinking of community college teaching. Trying now, himself, to withstand the anti-intellectual culture of the institution, Hanson continues to want the doctorate and to pursue his personal research projects. The institution in its rhetoric and its operating structure makes Eric Hanson feel even more alienated.

Several factors, then, concern Eric Hanson: his own sense of self-worth in "coming down" to the community college; his assessment of what's not working not yet having sorted itself out; his heightened sense of personal mission or calling lending exceptional importance to the meaning of work; his sense of gratitude to the college, as an alternate, second career in a region where he wanted to remain, colliding with his clear-minded advocacy of the life of the mind as the heartbeat of the community college; a dream as remote apparantly as his desire to teach in a good four-year school; finally an urge to connect with others around ideas while simultaneously resisting a more experienced, creative re-thinking of the assumptions which inform his image of the bright and the motivated. Adding to conflicts for this demanding teacher is that, unlike Powell with her swelling enrollments and highly marketable skills, Hanson faces a future in which the interest in broader educational perspectives is for the community college as an institution perhaps even more on the wane. His anxieties and frustrations are compounded by what he experienced in his first teaching career. Hanson seems to remain torn between elitist and populist assumptions about education. His sense of his loneliness in the profile connects with other participants who work in a similar structure. Edith Powell's sense of mobility and opportunity contrasts sharply with Hanson's sense of immobility.

On the other hand, Powell herself tells us how difficult it is to feel successful working in the community college: the demands are so varied and changing. Hanson's desire to suceed was particularly acute, given his circumstances. For Joseph Ryan, taking a position as a community college teacher after twenty-five years in the New York City Police Department meant something different from both Powell and Hanson. Ryan was eligible for retirement, wanted to move his family out of the city, and had the credentials necessary for community college teaching. As he says, he never considered another "second career" job opportunity, in business for instance. Where Hanson's language registers extremes, Ryan's is cautious and qualified. His first career shows up in his profile in the manner in which he approaches a topic or describes an experience. His formative years were spent in Catholic schools and in the military during World War II. Ryan felt lucky as a kid, says his prescriptive schooling was "invaluable." He used the military experience to entertain aspirations for college, a step never discussed in his family. From his earliest years Ryan's life traces itself out in predominantly sex-segregated institutions.

If Ryan's college and police experience is largely a blur in the portrait, those years give him the credentials he needs when he retires from an institution he makes clear is as close to the military as you get in our society. Ryan's first year teaching was as hard a year as he's known, and he states frankly that it didn't have to be that hard, that he was given too much to do with too little support and guidance. But Ryan is not one to complain, and from what he goes on to say we get the picture of a person who did not have to reassess his pedagogic and even work identity as did Hanson but one who had to learn the operations of a new job and who feels he now has a handle on it, does a good job, and gets satisfaction from his work.

Part of the reserve, the distance, Ryan keeps in his relationship to the interviewers relates to the in-uniform, out-of-uniform phenomenon Ryan describes in passing. In the profile he is pretty much "in uniform." Bearing in mind this sort of convention, Ryan reveals much about what his work is like and how he feels about it. He pinpoints quickly the false attitudes of traditional grading practices; he is concerned about evaluation and knows that some other kind of categorizing or classifying would be more compatible with his educational goals. He knows he brings more to the textbook because he has been a practitioner in the "real world," but he is not interested in parading as an expert but in motivating the "kids" to get involved, ask questions, and participate by assuming responsibilities and taking initiatives themselves. Ryan wishes there were a better qualified student enrolling in the program, but he clearly doesn't stay in that mold of thought long. He uses the classroom as a crucible for the creation of interest and involvement on the student's part. Ryan connects students' enjoyment of his course with their interest, their inquisitiveness, and their productivity.

He takes note of the fact that he is in an occupational program where you get to know students as liberal arts faculty do not get to know their students. With this observation Ryan raises a number of questions. Does familiarity with or proximity to students generate new knowledge and more intimate understanding? Or is the isolation felt by Ryan also present in the lives of his students, stigmatized by many with the label "criminal justice." Ryan's familiarity with his students remains a paternal one, and about his peers he is direct in his assessment that not much collegiality exists at his community college.

Some of this can be explained by a two-person program, the structure of isolation of individuals given specialized degree and certificate program responsibilities and having little sense of the school beyond their own assignments. While such isolation can exist throughout work situations, Ryan's commentary speaks directly to attitudes and structures unique to the community college. Faculty are professionals, and therefore operate in a purported context of autonomy. But autonomy and "being left alone" are two different states, and Ryan looks in vain for a sense of faculty cohesion he once felt when he was in uniform with his fellow officers. Furthermore, Ryan is sensitive to and savvy about the hierarchy of the college, the conventional assumptions about late-comers like criminal justice to the ranks of professionalism, and a latent or overt hostility to the occupation itself.

It is one thing to hear other participants "high up" in the internal hierarchy of community colleges speak of the larger professional society's view of their work. It's quite another to hear a serious-minded and resourceful faculty member near the bottom of that hierarchy discuss the "bottom of the totem pole" from the vantage point of a professional field itself defensive about its claims to status and recognition beyond that ascribed to a training program. Ryan not only feels the slights from other sectors of the community college; he also partially shares their viewpoint. As he says, as a youngster higher education to him meant the liberal arts, not vocational training. This attitude might cause a younger person more stress than it appears to give Ryan. His "understanding" of other viewpoints gives him room to be quiet within the organizational noise which he suggests does not mean too much. Ryan knows he and his friend and colleague run a good program, do not trouble the administration, and probably pay a price by not being more troublesome and therefore visible. Ryan's wry, self-effacing humor pokes through in this area more so than others. Perhaps both tired of and hopefully "retired from" the mindless busywork of bureaucracy, Ryan finds that-- in this relatively small college-- much is the same. If they are different, Ryan subtly keeps them more similar. His sense of the "chain of command" means that he and his colleague will remain probably doing good work in a context that finds it difficult to think freshly about criminal justice. Here is the situation where a sense of isolation is reinforced by silence and a larger unwillingness to "take on" the opposition and argue, for instance, for a new perspective on law, law enforcement, community health, etc.. Ryan's social understanding is at odds with his role as the late-comer to higher education: he won't tell engineering how to run their program as long as they won't tell criminal justice how to run theirs.

Fragmentation, tacit disharmony and conflict, a sense that what one knows is unavailable to others, there is a sense that this stage has players going through roles in ignorance of one another's lives as though the institution were much larger and more "impersonal." As Ryan tells his story, a program's relative size is one factor in relation to other factors of status, power, and opportunity. Ryan's reference to nursing is particularly insightful on the issue of social and organizational legitimacy; nobody will insult them. Policemen, however, live in a society which needs their labor and demeans their humanity, labels them in ways worse than the "big dumb football player" stereotype Ryan refers to when mentioning his college physical education major.

In American society, meritocratic and egalitarian in ethos if not often in fact, Edith Powell and Joseph Ryan completed their first careers having advanced to middle management, having "made it" to a considerable degree before coming to the community college. They also came from work in which the workplace and their private lives were overlapping. Ryan contrasts his past identity, however it was viewed by society, as one where a sense of community operated to build loyalty and support. He speaks feelingly now of his membership in criminal justice associations, a common professional interest bringing together educators in his field on a regional basis. Ryan proudly hangs certificates and plaques from these organizations on his office wall.

Hanson's sense of isolation is heightened in the company of Powell and Ryan. They each have vocational fields which enjoy varied levels of demands, and they are "authorities" of sorts, practitioners from the "real world," they go against the stereotype that "those who can't, teach." So while these three participants highlight conditions of world in the community college from the perspective of the second career person, these participants also reinforce and extend topics discussed in previous chapters. In hearing from persons in accounting and criminal justice, for example, we can see more concretely the range of vocational programs in community college and note the variations in status, level of aspirations, the hierarchy within the vocational ranks. Furthermore, Eric Hanson's switch from four-year to two-year teaching underscores the precarious position of the liberal arts faculty in an era of "the vocationalization of higher education" especially as it affects community colleges. So Eric Hanson, with initial high aspirations ,is faced with a sense of blocked power and opportunity.

All of the three "second career" participants struggle to do their work in the best way they can under conditions which prove to involve either enervating administrative problems, fragmentation, and isolation, or struggles with students whose motivation and sense of opportunity, whose minds, as a previous liberal arts participant put it, "aren't even in first gear." Taken out of context this comment could appear glib and condescending. But in fact, another feature of the second career profiles has to do with the relatively greater psychological distance from students they maintain. Powell, Hanson, and Ryan maintain a tone in their relation to students which never approximates the likes of the above passage in Cynthia Jamison's profile with its closeness to and identification with students. This matter has to do with age as well as second career and with the participant's disposition toward the in-depth interview process. In two out of three cases they show that in taking the second career community college job they are beyond the testing ground aspects of a first career. As Hanson remains caught up in the complexities of his work , Powell and Ryan--with a woman's and a man's features in their discourse-- maintain an equanimity and self-respect which are set over and against their observations of "the way it is" in the community college.

Chapter Thirteen

A Tide in the Affairs of Women:
Returning Women Students in the Community College

Introduction to the Profiles

This chapter presents five profiles of older women students. We have chosen to compose profiles of these five nontraditional students from among the twenty-four completed student interviews because they are part of a rapidly expanding group in the community college (Tittle and Denker 1980). References to older women students, or "returning women," have appeared frequently in the profiles of faculty in this report.

Some of the transcripts of faculty for whom we did not construct profiles reveal additional comments such as these: "We have a lot of returning people--a lot of divorced women that got married when they were eighteen coming back to college." "We have a lot of adult students coming back to school. Two-thirds of them are women. Our traditional right-out-of-school students [are] declining." "I really enjoy the older people in my classes. I guess I relate to them in terms of their having a commitment that seems to honor what we do."

These comments, as well as the remarks in the previous profiles , demonstrate the interest of faculty in their older students, predominantly female, whom they find to be hard-working, attentive, motivated, determined, and persistent. The stories and reflections of the students themselves provide another window on the work of community college faculty.

Through five profiles and the commentary that follows, this chapter examines what it is like to be a returning woman student in a community college. The commentary further explores individual and shared themes that are woven through the lives of the five women. Their lives touch those of faculty, staff, and other students in their attempts to reach deferred goals through the channels of community colleges in Massachusetts, New York, and California.

Profile

GLORIA SANTOS

(Gloria Santos, twenty-five, is a student in the two-year nursing program of a northeastern community college. She was interviewed at her home in the winter of 1980.)

When I first came here I was so excited about it. Maybe it is because it is the first college I have ever been to. I made it! And there I was filling in applications and all those papers to get in and it was kind of thrilling. At the same time I was nervous. You just walk around and see the people, and the place so big, and so many people that you don't even know. You try to find somebody that you know and you don't know anybody and it's thrilling and nervous at the same time.

The first day of school, I remember, I ended up in the wrong room and the middle of the period I realized that I was in the wrong room with the wrong teacher and I just got up and went to the front to the teacher and said, "I am sorry I am in the wrong class. Got to rush over to my teacher where I belong." The first time that I went for my schedule I happened to go to Miss Wiley--she is a counselor. I spend an entire summer going in and out this place. Everytime they give me a different paper to fill out and take it here and do this and that. The last time I went there--Miss Wiley was the one who made my schedules and she keeps on asking me, "Are you sure this is what you want?" I look at her and I say, "Yes, that is all I want. I just want to go home." She keeps asking me if this is what I really want to do. I said, yes, yes, okay. Then she gave me my schedule and told me where to go with all the papers. All the things they make you go through for you to enroll! They give you some papers to take over to City Hall to see if you are a legal resident. Down to City Hall and back with papers and they say, "Oh, sorry." Then they put in the file: not legal resident.

They gave me a couple of papers, the financial aid and BEOG, and I had to take them to the third floor. I went to Job Corps here on Main Street. They were the ones who filled out my BEOG. The girl didn't fill out some application I was eligible for, so I ended up with only BEOG. No special aid, no supplement, no nothing. So--oh, what the heck. My tuition was paid for and my books were paid. The rest, I had to do it on my own. Later on I found out that yes, financial aid from school and other aids would have been allotted to me. But I didn't ask anybody. Later on when I tried to join the work study they told me I couldn't apply for work study without having applied for financial aid. I did call. I tried to get the girl that filled out my application. I asked her why she didn't fill out my other applications for me for financial aid, and she said, "What? Oh, I am sorry." I said I didn't mean to complain, you know. Eventually all she said was, "Oh, I thought you wouldn't be interested in it." And I said, "Why wouldn't I be interested in it?"

Anyhow, I realized that I couldn't depend on anybody and I was really on my own. I said, "Now it is up to me to do something for myself and for my kids besides just taking care of them." I just realized it was up to me now. I went for my GED, which I failed the first time, and the second time I went here [to a special program] and I made it. It was quite an experience, like you stop being childish and start being a grown-up. It was--how can I say--it was a turn-about. My attitude towards everything changed. I guess I really realized that I had to do something for myself and the children. I said, "Well, if I go get a job, I am unskilled and that means that I will get a low-paying job, which eventually would leave me nothing." Half of that money would go to child care because I had my two children. So I said, "Well, I might as well go to school and try to do something." So I got my children in day care and my oldest was going to first grade by then. So I managed pretty well.

But when I got here I said, "Oh, my God, what am I going to do?" I knew nobody. I didn't know where anything was. I went to this particular office that was supposed to help me out. My interest was in nursing and nursing was closed. Had to wait and take a test. I asked a lady what she would advise me or suggest, what I can do. She said, "I don't know. We can't tell you that. You have to make up your own mind." And she just gave me the papers with all the courses that were still open and she said, "You have to choose." That is all she told me. So I went, "Eeny, meeny, miny, moe," and I was mad, you know, later on I was mad. She should have at least told me to go to another person that had more knowledge of what is going on, that was more able to suggest something to me. Later on I went to my accounting teacher. I explained to her what I did that day and what had happened. She said, "Oh, I can't believe that. How could you do that?" I said, "Very easy--eeny, meeny, miny, moe." She said, "Well, I suggest that you take liberal arts and science. There you can knock out some of the things that you eventually will be getting in nursing, like microbiology and psychology." So she recommended me liberal arts and science and I appreciated that, and I will as long as I live.

The first time in school--oh, it was miserable. I was taking English. I was taking Psychology. I was taking Data Processing and Accounting 101. What made it so difficult for me was it was the first time I was going back to school. I didn't know what I was getting into. Really I was just uptight about it and it was kind of a strain on me, the first semester, and I ended up withdrawing from Accounting and English. I passed Psychology. I passed Data Processing but with not such a good grade. I had to do something, so I stuck with those two. I got a C in Psychology. That teacher gives hard exams. He twists everything around--you really had to know your stuff.

A lot of my friends didn't make it--they failed the course. I was glad that at least I got a C. I don't have to repeat it. I went to him and talked to him about some of the difficulty that I had, which I still have sometimes, understanding the questions on the exam. Sometimes I am taking the exam and I have to stand up and go to the teacher and ask, "What do you mean by this question? What do you want?" Many times I knew the answers but I didn't understand the questions, so I would get up and tell him my problem. He said, "Even if you have to come to me ten times, you do it." Eventually I noticed that the kind of problems I have are the same problems that some students in the class were having. Spanish is my first language. Most of the students from this community college are English-speaking students so I know that I will be having more problems than the rest of the class. I started making friends with the other students. I realized that some of them have more problems that I do, so I said, "Well, I am not the only one."

I know now that I have to force myself a little bit to do a little bit better. My history teacher--he is really something else! To give the teachers what they want is something else again. The first semester I went to school I didn't know exactly what they want and what they expect of you. In this semester I am more prepared, maybe more relaxed about it. I am more willing to be more open-minded to the teacher and the course than last semester. Last semester I was too busy being nervous about it. Essay exams--it is the first time I have ever done them. Oh God, really, it is kind of difficult for me to understand his words, his vocabulary words. I am very glad that some of the teachers in the community college are very understanding, very open, and you know you can talk to them and they are there. They listen. The majority of the teachers, when they talk I can understand everything they say. But when they write, I try to make sense out of the question, what is that particular word, and that is why I found myself going to my teachers and asking, "What do you mean by this?"

I have this girl friend, Dottie, and I told her my problem and she agreed with me to at least twice a week go over the same thing the history teacher has talked about, but in her language, and since she is an A student in history I get a better picture. So it helps, it helps a lot. Last Friday she was here. She had never eaten Spanish food so I made her a Spanish dish. I speak to her in Spanish and make her think in Spanish and answer me back in Spanish, so she helps me with my history.

I am going to Spanish classes because I can't write Spanish as I am supposed to. Some of the American girls come to me and say, "How come you are taking Spanish? Aren't you Spanish?" I say, "Aren't you taking English? " And they look at me. I say, "I am taking Spanish and you are taking English, so we are even." I have to do so much reading of the English I don't have time to read Spanish. My real problems are the little accents. Oh God, if you will let me I will put an accent on every word, which will make a paper all wrong. But if they have Spanish they should have it all those years so the students will learn good Spanish, how to write it and how to read it and do it completely, not just halfway.

I guess I was lucky this semester--I have good teachers. No problems with teachers, really understanding teachers. Some teachers, you know, you ask them whatever your question is and they will give you one little bit of information and they expect you to understand everything by that small explanation. But you are just as blank as before. While the teachers that I have now will give me not only one explanation but a couple of examples. This particular English teacher, he will not let you go out of his office until you have proven to him that you understand what he is talking about. He admits his mistakes, which other students or teachers won't do.

I had a bad experience with an English teacher the semester before. For any little simple error she would mark me wrong. I had a tutor in English--she was a straight A student. She will tell me how to do--I will show it to her and she will go over every little detail. And I will redo it until it is right, according to her. When I take in the paper I get C's and D's. My tutor would say, "I don't know why she gave you that grade, because I myself would have done it like that and I would have gotten out of my teacher an A." I said, "Something is going on there. She is happy giving F's and D's, got to be something wrong here." I knew I didn't have a chance. I realized it. My other girl friend who had her before, she had all C's. Okay, when mid-semester came she gave her an F. My friend went to her and asked, "Why have you given me an F? All my papers were C's." She just said, "I don't think you are ready for my course." That was her answer. I realized that I didn't have a chance so I decided to withdraw from the course and I am very happy I did. Because with this teacher now I have no problems. He sees that I have misunderstood. He will tell me, "This is what I want you to do," and he will explain it again and then he will say, "Now go home and do it and bring it back to me tomorrow." Not all your teachers are willing to go through the hassles, telling the student, "You have missed the point and you have got to go over it again." Not many teachers are willing to do that. Too time-consuming. It changed my attitude about English teachers. I took this course because my girl friend recommended it to me. She speaks less English that I do. When I told her about my problem, she said, "You will see how different it will be with him." I am doing a better job now. I still have my mistakes in spelling but I always enjoy writing. Just the other day my girl friend taught me how to spell debt--you know with the "b" in there, I never even knew. And I said, "How are you supposed to know that it goes there? You don't even pronounce it!"

Accounting--I grew to hate it, you know. I don't want to even see it. I spent so much time with those machines, God, like it just pours right out of you. I don't want anything to do with this. I guess you have to be born for that. Maybe it is because I don't know it that well. I study math and I study it and I go over it and still I keep forgetting. I have gone back to fractions and studying it over and over. You put those little numbers on a piece of paper and you ask me to do it and I won't be able to do it. And I have studied it so many times and I keep going back, to see if it stays in my head--no way! So I said, "What am I going to do?" to one of the teachers in charge. He is another great teacher. He is good and you understand everything he says, he will explain it so well.

I didn't know anything about sociology. I had no encounter with sociology before in my life. The teacher gave us all a paper and asked us, "What is sociology?" and I couldn't answer. I didn't even know what it meant. About three weeks later he gave us another paper, an assignment: make a three-page essay about what is sociology. In that month's period,he explained it so well that I got an A. That is how great a teacher he is. Another teacher it would be just the same a month later--blank as ever about sociology.

I have to say that what really motivated me and gave me more confidence in myself was this mini-course that they gave us: "How to study effectively." During Christmas vacation they gave a week of this mini-course and that helped me. Last semester I was ready to give up. I signed up and I went and it really helped me a lot, lifted my spirit up, you know, and helped me to go at it again. It really changed my attitude towards the school and courses and the teachers. I was very discouraged. They told me, "You have been out of school for many years so don't expect to get grades like straight A's as soon as you come back because that is a big gap." I had been out of school for nine years and I was going back there and going there with no high school education, you know, a tremendous strain on me. They told the students, "You will need maybe one or two semesters to get into things here, to really start understanding yourself and your teachers." And I said, "You know, they are right. I have been trying to get good grades immediately. I have to see that it is too big a gap and I cannot train my brains to study after so many years and retain everything I read." And other information, you know: this is how you study your teacher, how to take notes when he is lecturing, when he repeats one thing, when he raises his voice to say something, and then he lowers it--hints what is really important. That program is usually for people that are going to study for the GED, not for students that have already been in college. It was already full and I was the last one to sign up for it. Maybe my adviser was the one who put it down for me to take this course. You know, even some of the students who come straight out of high school, some have wasted years of high school doing nothing and they try to make it in college. That is why they end up dropping out--because they can't compete.

[I want] to be able to understand what is really going on around me. That was what I always wanted to know. [Coming to the community college] means getting the education that I always wanted for myself. I always wanted to know what is going on and why is it going on like this, and how is it happening. I know I will never find out everything that is going on but I will at least have an idea now, and some other ideas which I didn't have before. I have a little bit more knowledge of what is going on in this world and I don't criticize others as much. Why is it that some of us are just poor and why is it that some people can just make it and go on and have a good education and why is it that others can't? Why do people behave like this, why do they do this instead of that? My psychology course helped me a lot, especially why I was thinking the way I was thinking. Now that I am taking sociology it is helping me a lot more to understand what is going on here in this world. Now I know that some people's benefit is other people's, how do you say, disadvantages. I find the college gives you an entirely new point of view. Before going to college you have a narrow point of view of everything. I am glad that I am here. Of course, as my teachers say, the more that you think you know the less you really know.

I always dreamed of going to college. When I did come here, I said, "Oh my God, I can't believe it, I am here." Now it is giving me the hope to continue further education. Right now I just feel greatly motivated with my plans to go towards my work. My main goal is becoming a nurse. For me the community college has been a great experience. I haven't been any other place, I can only talk about this place. It is good. I am enjoying being here.

I think that the majority of the teachers do care. They really listen. Someone told me at the beginning, "When you go to college you are practically on your own. It is up to you to do what you have to do." I thought that nobody would listen. I found out that is not true. There are teachers here to listen to your problems and they do find solutions for them. They are there to help you. I know where to go now to look for help. I know what to do when I don't know my way around. Teachers always say, "If you have a personal problem, come to me"--those who really care. They will say it to the class, "Feel free to come to me." But usually my personal problems I keep to myself. I have always been like that--I don't even go to my next relative. But with school problems you should go to one of my teachers or one of the counselors. Like yesterday they had me in a merry-go-around at the registrar's office, because the computer made a mistake. They had a course that I never took and it was U -- Unsatisfactory. I went to one of the counselors that I met during this how-to-study mini-course and she went to the people and in less than an hour the problem was solved.

When I wasn't here I was really doubtful about myself. I thought I wasn't going to be able to do it. Now that it is my second semester I have a completely different concept of myself. Now I know that I can do it, now I am ready to keep on at it, and I know that if I continue my education I will get where I want to go. I was just thinking about it this morning on the bus. I said, "Oh, what the hell, I am not going to be sneaky about it, I am going to show off my grades." So today I was showing off my grades. I called up my aunt and I told her I got B and I got this and I got that, and I went to my girl friend's house and I showed them to her. I went around to my relatives. I do it because I want them so badly to go back to school. I think that there is so much to know and so much out there that they are ignorant about, so many things that they don't understand. They have a narrow point of view, the way I used to have, and now I want them to know, to experience the same things that I am experiencing. I want them to break through, I want them to go to school, to become someone, to get education at least. Because they all--they are brighter than I am. I notice that many many times. Yet all they want to do is work. And I say, "That is not enough, you know. When you get laid off, what are you going to do? You going to sit around in your house? You know you need at least a part-time education." So far I got only one of my cousins to the GED program. She is really going at it. Chances are she will do better than I did. Another cousin of mine--I want him to come to college. But he is so busy--you know, male--he is so busy working. He is single so he could do it. You know, he could work part-time and go part-time to school. I wish I could pull him here, but I can only advise, or suggest.

My mother doesn't believe in books. I am the only one, female side, that has graduated with a GED and I am the first one in college. I have a cousin studying law in Puerto Rico. I feel proud. I also feel uncomfortable because I wish with all my heart that all of us would be getting a better education. My mother said, "That is a waste of time." Not to me personally, but she has mentioned it around and I have heard it. She thinks that it is just laziness, because she believes in work. She is a hard-working woman. She has worked all her life. For her, education beyond a high school is just wasting it. I don't pay attention to her. If I would I wouldn't be here. She thinks I should be working or taking care of my kids. She was brought up that way and that is her narrow point of view.

My children have been in nursery, day care, and preschool for so many years now, since they were babies. I got a baby sitter when my daughter was three years old. Then preschool and now this other day care. Sometimes I feel guilty about it because I don't spend as much time as I really wish or I should with them. Sometimes they just want to play with me and I say I can't do it now, I have got to wait. When I am trying to sit down and study, they will be pulling on me or they will be calling, "Look at this, look at that." And they go, "Oh, Mom, you don't have time for us now." I say, "Don't say that". This semester I tried to give my attention to them from the time they came from school at four until eight or nine o'clock and I wouldn't do studying between those hours and I just tend to them and feed them and take care of them, and listen to what they have to say, and complaints or any happy notes from school. And after they are in bed, well, then I take time for me. They get angry if I am reading my own books and I am not reading them a story. "You can read for yourself, and not read for us"--that kind of attitude.

I try to make my schedule so that by the time they are home I have been able to sit down and rest for a little while. I have to leave my work from like eight-thirty to--sometimes I won't finish until twelve. When I want to get some reading done--because I can read but not as fast as some other students so it takes me a little bit longer--eventually I end up going to bed at one o'clock in the morning. I get up at six. Sometimes I just wake them up and say, "You have got to go to school," and I don't get up. They know how to dress themselves and they know how to serve their own breakfast. When it is hot breakfast I get up and do it but some days I let them eat cold cereal. So they get up and they do it themselves. I open my eyes and say, "Have you combed your hair?" They say, "Yes, Mommy," but when the bus comes I get up and watch them go out.

Sometimes I fear maybe I am hurting them. While I am doing something good, at the same time I am doing something bad to them. I don't know--it is like, how can I say, conflicts of emotions, inside of me and sometimes when I stop studying I look at them and I feel guilty about it. My son says he understands a little bit, but not my daughter. My son is a little bit more mature and he understands when I say, "No, " because of this and that. He will say, "Okay, Mom, I understand." I can see it in his face that he is understanding me--but not my daughter. She just looks at me, like--like accusing me. It is hard. Yesterday I got home so tired because I had an exam at nine o'clock in the morning and I had courses one right after the other. And then I had to be going to the registrar's office with my problem. I got home exhausted at four o'clock so I waited for them and I made dinner and I gave it to them and then I went and took a nap, because I had to continue my studies later on. I just lay down and left them all alone and I didn't even say anything, I just went in and took a nap. When I woke up all the lights were turned off and they were just sitting on the sofa looking at me. I felt so guilty. I said, "Go to bed, go sleep," and I told them, "It is too late to watch television now, time for you to go to bed," because they get up at six o'clock in the morning. And they said, "Mom, you are not fair." My daughter is the grouchy one. She says, "Mom, we didn't see television," and I said, "It is late, I am sorry." And they each went to their bed and then I was feeling guilty. But I sat down and studied till after midnight.

I don't know why I feel so guilty. Today is Friday so I will make up for it, somehow. Tomorrow I will take them shopping with me. I have been living with it and I guess I am going to have to live with it, and work my way around it. I am just waiting for my daughter to be a little bit older so I can explain it to her, what is going on, and hope she understands and won't accuse me of anything. Many many parents are going to school, to work, and they are neglecting their children in some way or the other. I have the advantage that I started this when they were little, so it not new or abrupt to them when they are big: "I can't attend to you no more, I have got to do this." I tell them, "You go to school--right? And I have to go to school. You study, I have to study. You do your work, I have to do my work you know, and if I don't study I get bad grades." My daughter doesn't understand that but my son does. "If I get bad grades I will never finish school, I will have to stay there as long as I live." And he just looks at me with these big wide eyes. He understands. I try to explain to my daughter that I can't play with her or I can't listen. She will get mad and she will start grabbing my paper. My son is very protective toward her. He will take her to another room and he starts talking to her. He puts his arms around her and says, "Don't worry, let's play." I don't know. Hopefully they will stick to education. Oh God, I know that when they are teenagers they usually turn to other things, other than education, sort of get bored with school. I know, so many years just going to school, they just get bored and they want to go into things grown-up people do. So since I went through it I understand it, and therefore I will understand my children when they grow up. I just say, "God, don't let me forget." It will be up to them to make whatever they want out of their lives. I can only tell them how hard it is to drop out of school and try to go at that again. The longer you are out the harder it is to get back.

I never learned how to skate. I don't know how to ride a bike. I want my daughter to know how to swim, I want her to know how to skate, I want to buy her a bicycle, I want her to dance, I want her to do everything that a girl can do. Right now I am not able to do any of that because my mother raised me so strictly and I think that it was unfair. No recreation, no nothing. Stay home, wash dishes and clean,--that was it for me. For my brother it was okay to learn how to ride a bike and to go swim, to be on the street and play. My mother was very strict about us. Still she was always working. She wanted to know that we were in the house when she wasn't there, and doing what we are supposed to do. When my children say, "I am going to the Boys' Club," I say, "Oh, no you are not," being overprotective. I know I will have to let them go and take the chance that there is going to be a broken arm. Oh God--maybe that is what my mother felt. She was afraid of something happening outside when she wasn't looking. Eventually, you know, I ran away when I was fourteen. And my brother would visit my mother once in a blue moon, now only once a year, ever since he got away from that protectiveness of hers.

I want my children to have a better life, a broader way of thinking than the way I was raised. I never saw my mother take a book in her hands. My mother never explained anything to me--she couldn't. I couldn't go to her even when I was in elementary school. Even if she knew, she wouldn't have time, she was too tired. When my child comes from school--"Mommy, I got a problem, explain it to me," I want to be able to sit down and explain it to her, the right way. I want to be more involved with my children's life than what my parents were with me. I want to be with my kids all the way through until their adult life. Then they're on their own and I could let them go. Then I will be on my own.

I want to learn, I want to know, first for my own sake and then for them. Maybe this is my only chance. In the future it will be their chance, but maybe this is the only one that I have. I am here in college instead of a nursing program because I think maybe after I am in nursing, if I don't like nursing, then I will have my two years of college to fall back on. But so far I am still interested in nursing. I have never had the experience but it just appeals to me, being able to help people, being able to take care of people. I know that I will be a good nurse. You know I won't be emotionally involved with every patient--that will be impossible. I feel very good about it--I feel like I am really doing something for somebody. I don't mind taking care of my kids and I don't mind taking care of other people. You know, maybe I was just born like that.

I want to say I am very proud of myself. Last year at this time I was only dreaming. And now my dream has come true. They just don't give grades. You have to earn them, you have to work for them. It motivates me to keep on studying. I want to keep those grades that I have or make them go up half a grade. For now I am satisfied with B's. By next semester maybe I will go beyond and try to get A's. You know it has got to be step by step, from C's to B's, and B's to A's. I am always thinking about how to do things a little bit better. That is why I am in Miss Sorel's class--she is teaching how to study effectively, how to read effectively, how to take notes effectively. And it really works. I am constantly thinking about those things.

It didn't matter in grade school. All you were doing was fooling around. The last year that I went to school I hardly paid attention to school. Not going to school for all those years made me really think about it again. I have a good English teacher but he talks like he is picking words out of the dictionary to throw them at me. I sit down and I read and I read and I listen to the tapes that Miss Sorel gives me. Right now I am trying to develop my skills of writing essays for the exams. I have the ideas but to write it down is difficult for me because I don't know how to spell the words or how to really express myself on a piece of paper. How can I go about making an essay with thoughts correctly written and at the same time try to get my spelling correct? And at the same time really writing everything that is going through my mind? Other people will say it is easy, you just get the answer and put it on a piece of paper. No, there are so many things that I have to be thinking of. Sometimes I say, "Maybe it is me, it is my fault, maybe I am the only one." But I found out that it was a problem that most of the class is having. Just because they go every day and sit down and are there--maybe they are in the same mess that I am in.

I hope I can continue. I wish, I hope, and I am willing to keep on with this till I have my degree, first in college and then in nursing. If I can get a good education and work, then I will be able to afford what my children need. I guess when you go through all this hassle of going to school, it is because you think of the future, because you want to do better for the future than what you are doing up to now. I guess most of the people that go to school are thinking of the future. I want to know, how far can I go? I want to know, how good can I do? I want to know if I can really go all the way up to the top. Almost every morning I get up and on the way here taking the bus I am thinking, "Gee, I'm happy. I'm happy I'm doing it. I'm going through with it."

Profile

LESLIE PORTER

(Leslie Porter, twenty-five, is a student in a pre-engineering technology program in a northeastern community college. She was interviewed at the college in the spring of 1982.)

I started working at the company four years ago. I was nineteen and I was hired as an apprentice to go through a three-year apprenticeship program. After completing this program I would have the title Automatic Equipment Mechanic. Once you have gone through this apprenticeship they want you to stay there. I knew that I didn't want to stay there for the rest of my life. I started applying to different colleges. I looked at options for going to school. In the end I decided to move and just go back full time.

I applied to a bunch of four-year colleges. I talked to a guy at one college and he recommended that I go to this community college. He said that for two years you can go there, it's a lot cheaper, you can find out if you like the program. Find out if I was good enough in math and science before I jumped into an engineering program. This guy really looked at my background and he said, "Well, look, you can either come right to this school, it's expensive, or you can go to community college for a couple of years or a year and then know by your grades whether you should pursue this field." Engineering just seemed like my next logical step to go to. And I really liked that kind of work but I didn't know I had the ability to perform with this math and science business. He said, "Just get some background, see if you like the math and science because that is the core of it all. And if you don't like that then there is no point in going on. Then you might as well stay in the technical field and just go and do something specific instead of trying this broad thing called engineering." I hadn't heard of this community college before that. I mean this guy probably saved me $10,000 you know. I was really considering going to a four-year school.

In high school I didn't have any chemistry or physics. I had the basic math, I had physical science, I wanted to stay away from that math and science stuff. It scared me. I had no interest in it in high school whatsoever. I was busy socializing. My parents did want me to go to college, so I stayed in the college curriculum, but I never excelled in anything. I took shorthand and typing but I didn't like that either. I couldn't see myself sitting at a desk all day long. My boyfriend at that time was very bright and very mechanical.

He used to take a car and just rip it apart down to nothing and then build it back up again the way he wanted it. And I had the option to either watch him do it or else give him a hand or try and learn something. So eventually I picked up enough to do things on my own. My parents let me use one car. I would keep it tuned and I would clean it and my boyfriend would tell me what to do and I'd do it on my car. And I loved it.

So then I graduated and I chose an agricultural-technical college, a two-year school, because it was farther away from home. I discussed options with the adviser there. He said, "What are you interested in?" and I said, "To tell you the truth I really like working with my hands with cars and mechanical things. Could I just take a couple of classes in mechanics?" He said they had one program in there for mechanics and that was an eight-hour-a-day program, that was it. I remember sitting there thinking, "Is this a turning-point, what do I do? I don't want to be a secretary. But do I want to do this eight hours a day?" I said, "I'll try it, I'll give it a go." He told me that they never had a girl through that curriculum before.

They are not going to tell a girl that she can't go through. I think they were waiting for that first girl. We started with fifty guys in the class and there could have been problems. Here are these teachers who have been dealing with eighteen-year-old guys all their lives and now all of a sudden they get a girl in class. I remember sitting down with the head of the department. He explained they were proud to have a girl here and they would help me as much as they possibly could. So I started and school went well. I tried to be friendly with everyone and I didn't try and make an issue of it. And everybody was very helpful, the teachers were great. If you felt like you could do it on your own, they would stand back and let you try. There was a little bit of the male chauvinism where somebody would see you picking up something heavy and they would come over and help, which I thought was nice. I'm in no way a real woman's libber. I like to have doors opened for me, I am just that type of person. I would say that I had the best two years of my life so far in that school. My grades just zoomed from high school. I was getting A's, because I really liked what I was doing. It was fun to go to school. I went home on Christmas and Easter, that's it. And it was nice living in the dorm. The whole hall was full of girls, a lot of activities going on. They fed you, they gave you a room and a bed and everything that you could possibly want. To me it was freedom for a while. Also I thought the guys in the class were great. Now there weren't fifty of them, maybe there were twenty-five at the end or thirty. Besides the girls on my hall these were my friends.

In the dorm it was a novelty more or less. They had the girl mechanic on their floor and they put it in the paper and took a picture of me in the shop and they put it on television. And they sent something to my newspaper at home. It was just kind of fun. You were doing something different and people took notice.

I graduated in 1976. A lot of different companies were coming to the college to recruit students to work for their company and to go through apprenticeships. My professor said that this certain company was good. At that time they were looking for any girl with any mechanical ability just to get girls interested. They paid for the trip there and they put us up in a hotel and gave us dinner and we went to the interview the next day. And I got hired. I graduated May 15 and I started at the company July 5.

It was a good job, the pay was good. First I would be working with other mechanics and I would go in and try and do what I could and they would teach me and eventually you pick it up for yourself. When a machine breaks down, every minute that it is down is costing them say $1,000. So there is a lot of pressure and challenge and you have to fix it as fast as you can. They taught me a little bit about everything. About computers, electronics, pneumatics, hydraulics. The company employs 50,000 people so you are talking about a plant that is seven miles long. It's just an immense place and in a way you feel like such a little part of it. I was very green when I went there.

When you are an apprentice the majority of the time is spent in the classroom. I worked forty hours a week. They had their own school, right in the plant. You would have a notebook and the teacher would be up at the blackboard, seven or eight people in the class. They put so much money into me. These programs cost them a lot and they want you to work there for a long period of time.

I talked to a lot of people that I worked with in their thirties and I would ask their advice and they would say, "Get out now while you can." Maybe they had no college education or two years of college and they always said they'll go back, everybody says, "I'll go back, I'll get that degree," but then you have a family and then you can't. The money, the security, is really good. Most of them said, "Do it while you are young, do it now. It's not going to get easier after you get married or have children, then you are going to say, I don't have the time." A lot of these guys had been working shift work for ten years. They see that management are the only ones that are working this eight-to-four shift and that's what they want but without an education they don't see any way to get there. They don't want to put you behind a desk if you are so good in the field. But money is security, and to go to school meant no more money, all that money that you were making every week is gone. So I thought long and hard about it. The day I quit was exactly four years after I started there. I've never said, "I wish I was back there." I hope I end up with my four-year degree, I hope financially things will work out okay and I'm not sorry, so far.

I did very well in grade school first through fourth grade. I remember my mother saying how well I did. Then all of a sudden in fifth or sixth grade I was turned off by the whole thing. My grades showed that I wasn't interested . The only thing that I really liked was biology and my father is a microbiologist. I didn't want to do my homework. My mother always used to say, "You know you are not doing anything." I would come home and I wasn't allowed to watch television, but I wouldn't do my homework either. I would do something else. I only remember one test in high school and their saying that it wasn't an IQ problem. They said it was just an application problem: "She does not apply herself." My parents did what they could . My father would help me anytime I wanted, I just didn't want the help. I wish I knew what turned me off to school, because I like school now and I like studying. As soon as I went to college I liked it. I was very headstrong and I wouldn't do anything that I didn't want to do. My parents are wonderful people but there is just so much that you can do. What else could they have done with me? They can't ground you for your entire high school career!

I think my father was a little wary of my getting into this mechanics full time. But once they saw my first grades they were thrilled. And my father's attitude was changing you know. If anybody would say something about his daughter going into mechanics he would be right behind me fighting for me. They just wanted me to do well in school and I finally found something that I was interested in and I did well in.

I wanted to get out of the house. When I think back on it, I think how perfect, you know, to go to a two-year school, to live away from home and enjoy that, and then to work and make some money, buy a car and do some things that you want to do, and then go to school. Now you are ready for it. Now you have gained enough experience, now you want to go to school, you want to study. And now you are ready to take those classes that you couldn't take out of high school. I just wasn't ready for that type of discipline at that time. It was almost like I just had to stumble on to it. I hope that I stumble on to the type of engineering I want to go into.

In a way I don't know what I am looking for. I know that I want the math and science, I know that I want the engineering of some type. At my first two-year college I was in such a structured program that that was my goal. It was nothing like liberal arts. You didn't have a choice; once you were in there your whole program was set for you. I didn't even have to think about it.

I have an interest in a lot of different things. I wish I could have taken some classical music, some literature courses. I liked what I was doing but then I get in the world and I see peole who have four-year degrees. My boyfriend has a degree in accounting. He took some math and a course in business and some music courses and a lot of literature courses, history, all these things. So he is more well-rounded and he really knows a lot about the world. I have too many things that I want to do and I want to take. Right now all I do is study and I can't see myself fitting anything else in. I played the piano and the flute when I was in grade school. I like classical music and I would like to get into that.

I've been exposed to men a lot, a boyfriend in high school, fifty males in my class, working with all men at the company, so you are seeing what they are doing and hey, it looks a lot more interesting than sewing to me. My mother has a bachelor's in home ec. She's a wonderful cook, she can sew like a dream. She showed me how to sew and taught me how to cook. She is good with kids of all ages, especially younger children. Now she's getting away from the child-rearing thing. She's got a part-time job and goes to school at night. She works as a secretary for the church. Episcopalian. My father sings in the choir. Even in high school when I was doing poorly it was always, well, maybe we could try this or maybe we could try that, but it was never boy, you are stupid. After Christmas, after birthdays, you would have to write thank-you notes to your grandparents and that was always a big thing. My mother was always saying, "Write those thank-you notes," and she would go on and on about that.

I have been to a two-year college before so that is not really new to me but I think the whole structure of this college is different from the one that I went to before. Just the fact that I'm not living here, I'm living on my own instead of being on campus, plus the fact that I am older. I don't think you make the same types of friendships you have at a school where you are staying. You make friends, but it is more of a surface type of relationship than a real close relationship like a roommate. The friends that I consider my closest friends are generally people that are close to my age. I think people that are older, that are in college now, probably have been out working, have discovered for one reason or another that they wanted to go back to school. Those people are a little bit more serious about studying. I think now I am a lot more serious about my study; because of the curriculum I have no choice.

I try to do as well as I can and you know you can tell when you are slipping behind a little bit. I was completely satisfied with my grades last year. This year things are tougher. Two of my courses I am working for A's the other two I'm hoping for B's. This year I started in a course of mechanics. Now the prerequisites for that are engineering science one and two and I didn't take those last year, so I am having a difficult time. The courses that I followed in the sequence, like precalculus, calc one, calc two, and calc three, everything follows along. But if you don't take the prerequisites then you run into a little bit of a problem.

Next semester I'll probably be taking Engineering Science I at a four-year college. I'll cross-register over there. We have to take one social science every semester, that generally means psychology, sociology, economics. When I started going here my adviser told me, "You are getting back into school. We'll put you into physics, math, chemistry, and English," and he didn't give me a social science. I could have handled another course but they just wanted to see how I would do. And I had a lot of extra time. So I didn't start the social science until the next semester.

Psychology is a very interesting subject, but at this point I don't have the time to put into it so I read the chapters, I sort of cram for the tests. I think I chose psychology because it was easy. I hate to use that as a reason but I thought I better just ease off this semester. Mechanics is very time-consuming and there is a test every two weeks. There is so much material thrown at you, if he doesn't give a test every two weeks people fall behind and there is just no way to cram in three or four days the material that he gives you in two or three weeks. You just have to do it night after night. I remember sitting with other people and they were talking psychology and saying how easy it was compared to sociology because all you had to do was read the chapter and memorize the terms. And the next semester when I had a choice of either economics or psychology I took psychology.

I'm working also. I'm a receptionist at a veterinary hospital. Thursdays I work from two to nine and then Saturday another six hours. Over the summer, after I completed the physics course, I knew that I wanted to make some money and I got into this. I love animals, we have two dogs at home. I had originally planned to work there for one month. And then the doctor asked me to stay on. I said no, I was going to school. He offered me a part-time position and I sort of named my own hours. I like the work, it's relaxing, I can leave school and my mind is all worked up about math or physics and then for the next couple of hours I can just deal with people. Seeing people in a place where these pets are like their children, pets that have heart problems and pets that are taking chemotherapy. And then at the end of the night I do the books.

I have to put a lot of time into getting good grades and I did last semester too. That was pointed out to me before I started. They want you to know because they have seen a lot of kids under a lot of pressure and if you can't take it you are going to drop out. I feel it, but so far it hasn't been too bad. Before a test comes up you worry about your grades. The caliber gets harder and harder, your expectations get lower and lower. Before I would be upset if I didn't get all A's. If I got an eighty-five on a test last year I was all upset: if I had just worked a little harder I would have had the A. That was the big goal, to get exempt from exams. If you have an A average you can get out. In sociology I had an A average so I got exempt from the exam. Chemistry I had an A on every test until the last one, I got an eighty-seven, and I couldn't get exempt. Now if I get a B on a test it doesn't upset me like it used to.

With a two-year engineering science degree there is not much you are going to do with it, unless you go on to some type of technical program. I feel that everybody is going to transfer. Because if they were going into a technical program I don't think they would have bothered with all the math and science.

Your "cum," it is everything. They really want you to keep your cum up because that is what the colleges look at. They want to see it after this semester because we start applying to four-year schools. They expect people to transfer so they help you out by bringing representatives from different schools.

With mechanics I've gone in for extra help because I need it. I look on the schedule, see when the teacher has an office hour, and then I go in and he tries to help me. The same thing with physics, if I have a problem. They are helpful in that way. Math I really don't seem to have a problem as far as getting extra help. If I walk by the math room and I see my teacher in there, I may drop in just to say hello depending on whether he looks busy. I feel pretty good about the help that is offered here.

If I can pick up the courses that I want to pick up next semester and this summer, I may be able to start at a four-year institution next September. The teachers are very helpful about it, they want to see you do well too. I think they have a very good record and they are always referring to the number of students that have transferred and the attrition rate being very low. And I think they are very proud of it and if they weren't good, I don't think the four-year colleges would have the transfer agreement that they have with them now. We try and parallel our courses to theirs for the first two years. If you go through the engineering science program here and take everything that they recommend you take for the first two years you are overqualified for a lot of colleges.

The only way that I see other people is in liberal arts classes, in social sciences. I have met some people in liberal arts that were in my math and calc one, maybe biology students, but once you get into calc two that's about the break-off point and then calc three, you are not going to find any people taking calc three that aren't in engineering science. I took two semesters of composition, English, so I met a variety of people in there. But last year was sort of the last time. If this was a two-year school where you were staying on campus all day it would be a lot different.

I really don't do a lot of socializing on campus. I almost feel I'm wasting my time because I could get a little extra help from my teacher in that time period or try and grab one of my classmates and get a lab done. On a nice day you see a lot of people outdoors playing frisbee, having a good time. Our mechanics teacher told us in the beginning, "You are going to feel like you are missing something when you see a lot of kids outside and you see them riding around in cars and out playing football. But you know you are going to have to study, you have to realize it right now. You are really going to have to put your nose to the books, and it will pay off."

We study together in the library. If there is a test coming up people try to work together on a lab. Then you have input from several different people and get different ideas. It's always much easier and much faster to work with groups. In my other college it wasn't as serious as it is now. Now it's, you know, you really have to sit down and study.

The only teacher that is female is my psychology teacher. The math teacher is easygoing. Nice guy, a funny guy, he tells a lot of jokes. We sit there and take notes and he lectures. People ask questions, everybody is pretty relaxed. People generally don't skip the class. Because every day it's important. People don't want to miss out. Mechanics is generally walking in and being prepared, you have to be prepared when you walk in there . You have to sit and take those notes and get them down in time. He doesn't have time to fool around so he just starts at one end and goes to the other end. You really have to concentrate to keep up with him. Physics--he writes a lot too. He may go over a lab one day, he may go over homework problems. One day he may lecture the whole class period. The material is tough. You don't have to worry about getting every single little word down on that paper like you do in mechanics so it's a little easier.

A lot of times in certain classes people don't ask many questions. They don't want to feel stupid I guess. Some classes I ask a lot of questions, some I don't. I think I am the type of person who prefers to go home and try it myself before I will ask a question though, so I generally keep quiet. If I have something I'll speak up. Psychology is very relaxed. She is lecturing but she asks a lot of questions and you give her a lot of input, that is what she wants. It is not so much of a lecture situation , it is more of just a discussion and she discusses a lot. Maybe something about perception or about language or about money and we will have a discussion on it. And she makes analogies to other things that apply to the text and it's interesting. It is kind of a relaxing class.

The classes are getting a little smaller after the midterm because people drop. When I took physics we started out with a huge class, a whole lecture hall was filled. By the end of the course we had maybe twenty people. Physics III, by the time you get there very few people are going to drop. Because they have gotten there, they might as well continue, they are going for something.

A lot of people take five semesters to complete the program. It was suggested the first day of mechanics. He said, "A lot of people take three years to complete this program, a lot of people take five semesters, it has nothing to do with how smart you are. This program is very very rigorous and if you want to maintain that grade-point average do it the way that you can. If you have to take another semester, do it, you want to get into a good college, a college of your choice."

When you think of the way a little boy is brought up and if his father is a doer, he is out doing the yard or hunting or fishing. They sit him down with a hammer at some blocks and say, "Build something." A little girl, you might show her how to sew, put in a zipper, but with a little boy maybe there is more teaching him how to do it himself, or tinker. You know fathers, they like to tinker around. Women have to be told step-wise how to do something, where a man may be able to figure it out. If you are brought up that way then how are you supposed to know any differently? Women's lib has never bothered me particularly because I was part of the other side, I never felt that I was being cheated. I had all the opportunities of what the women's libber would like to see a girl do so I could never say that I thought that they were unfair to women. I don't see any inequality myself, but it's there, don't get me wrong, I'm not that blind. I know there are a lot of women who have a good reason to scream but I've always felt that sometimes they are getting a bit too radical, they are taking it a little bit too far. But if they didn't we wouldn't be where we are today. Here [at the community college] there is no discrimination at all that I can see. I don't see this campus as being a radical campus. I never hear arguments between males and females about equality. It is a nice atmosphere. I don't think I have been in a women's lib discussion for a long time. I think it has gone down a little bit as an issue. In these programs, engineering science, nobody has ever said anything about women, like, "You can't handle this program," or "What are you doing here?"

Sometimes I think, "What if I had the opportunity to go to a four-year college?" But I didn't and I often wonder if maybe I should have, but I don't think I would have known what curriculum I would have wanted to get into. It wouldn't have worked for me. But sometimes I wonder what I would be doing right now if I did go to a four-year school instead of a two-year school.

I look at my being here as an excellent opportunity for me to better myself, to start something new in my life, engineering, and I hope to gain many things by that. It provides me with an opportunity to go to school, I can afford this school, it's perfect for my needs.

I am twenty-five. There are only seven years between me and most of the kids here, and I still see a great difference. I can't say that I'm out of a different era but I can look at it from a different perspective. I'm not talking about academically, everybody I think is in the same pool academically, but socially I look from a different viewpoint. It may sound funny because they are not that much younger but there is a definite difference in how you look at school and how you look at your grades, how you look at your life, your future, your past. I have a little bit more to look back on than they do. I've a little bit more experience, I have work experience. Four years of work experience as opposed to maybe a kid that has worked a summer. I've been in the business world, I 've been in the forty-hour-a-week grind . It may be different at a four-year school. You get people who are a little older, at least two years older than the younger crowd here.

It seems so far I've always had to work for what I got. It may not go right for awhile but eventually everything sort of works its way in. It's like little blocks eventually work their way together. I get mixed up and then I see the light and then I once in a while think, "Is that what I really want?" And then one day it will make sense to me. Like when I chose to go into engineering. Everything at first was, well, I don't know, and you think you can never make up your mind, and then something makes sense to you. You think back. Why didn't I see the light before? But it just takes awhile. The year before I came to the community college I was leaving the company. I wasn't sure what my financial situation would be, I had no idea where I would be; then all of a sudden engineering seemed to make so much sense to me. One day I said, "Well, of course that's what I want." Then I couldn't decide about the cost of a four-year school. How am I going to afford this? I had help from the guy at the college and then everything seemed to fall into place.

I just had an interview at a four-year engineering school and there are a lot of different types of engineering there, environmental, materials engineering, things like that. Things like organic chemistry which is something that I would like to take. I still have to do the same thing with other colleges. At this point I'm sort of in the same well that I was in before. Eventually things will fall into place--and then all of a sudden it will make sense to me. A lot of times you will talk to advisers or professors and they know what is right for the populace, but they may not know what is right for you. Eventually you are going to have to make the decision on your own.

Our psychology teacher was telling us something interesting about courses. She said that if you have any extra time, this college offers credit courses in you name it, cooking, skiing, tennis, music, whatever. She said, "Just take one, you are never going to know if you like something until you try it. Just take some mini-courses or some no-credit courses, they are very cheap.

You might find something that you like to do. A sport can lead to other things too. You start something and it doesn't seem very important to you and then all of a sudden it blows up into something that you are going to do for the rest of your life." If I had never worked on that car when I was sixteen years old, where would I be now? Would I be punching keys on the typewriter somewhere? All of a sudden you find out you really enjoy something and it's another surface to your life.

I don't think I'm into the real engineering yet. This is all really the math and science . I was associated with a lot of engineers at the company. Their work was design work or problem solving and I was always into technical things. Sometimes I don't think math applies to this because it's off in space somewhere, but you will hit upon something in physics that is very interesting and you didn't know that before. A very small aspect of light, a light wave or a spectrum and all of a sudden something hits you and it's nothing that you have been exposed to before. I haven't taken any computer science yet. I'm really looking forward to that next semester. This whole world is just, you know, turning over with this new computer science and I'd like to see if I'm adept at it at all. I'm taking a course called Materials--properties and stresses and strains on materials. If I like that then I'll consider materials engineering possibly.

Math to me comes a lot easier than physics and mechanics. I did it the right way--I started with advanced algebra to get myself back in the swing of things. I didn't jump right into calc one. Everything falls into place and if you miss a big hunk of it, of course you are going to be behind. I didn't think that I was good in it in high school. Not at all. After pre-calculus here I knew that it was going to be all right. A lot of people shy away from calculus. They hear the word and it just sounds terrible to them. I knew that I had to go through calculus four. It's the first step into a whole different thing. Am I going to be able to handle this? And then you get into it and you realize it's okay. Calc one is the break-off point. People either fail it and just don't go on in math or take it again because they have to. I took it the second semester, I'd say half or three-quarters of the people in there were taking it over again.

I think a lot of courses have that break-off point. I don't think it's an intellectual problem. I think it's more of an interest, or just the fact that you happen to be good at something. I don't happen to be good at writing papers. I don't like it. I'm used to a lot of numbers and I'm just not used to writing long, drawn-out reports. A lot of other people are great at it, they thrive on it. That's not for me. I'd rather stay with the math. I think with physics the drop-out point probably is physics one or two because if you don't plan to go on in calculus you really are not going to go on in physics too far, since it's calculus-based. If you go into nuclear engineering--I was looking at the catalogue and they require an immense amount of mathematics. Nuclear has two or three more advanced calculus, just going on and on in math. I don't think I'll go that far. I don't think I have what it takes to be a nuclear engineer.

Certain types of engineering are very structured and rigorous. Nuclear, chemical, they are very competitive programs. I don't think I would opt for one of those programs. It's so competitive that people have planned way ahead. They really want people in there that are competitive enough to deal with it. I'm not a real competitive person. I don't fight other people for my grades. I may fight myself but I don't fight other people. I see a lot of women in chemical engineering so I'm not sure if it's just the men or women now. I think before it was probably the men. They always seem to be more competitive in one way or another. In high school it's apparent with football and basketball, and girls are geared more towards track, things like that where you are working against yourself . I think that is one of the reasons why men are basically the achievers. I think that is the way it is right now. you know, but I think it is changing.

I think I sort of ride the middle line. I work my way in and I work around all this women's lib stuff. I'll do it my own way. I'm not saying that people that are achievers are pushy but they have to have something about them, there has to be a drive there, there has to be something. If I really decide on what I want, yes, I think I would fight for it. But I've got such a long way to go as far as deciding on chemical engineering. It would have to be a big change in my life at this point to go for chemical engineering, it really would.

My roommate planned on getting a two-year degree and that's it, stop there, and get a job. Now she's talking about a master's. There are some programs where you can combine your master's of engineering and your MBA. You can structure your schedule in your fourth year differently and go into a professional program for a fifth year. I'm looking into that a little bit. Getting out in that one extra year with a master's really looks good. I imagine in the next year I'll pick up some ideas about it, see how the job market is, what is happening to these engineers with these masters'.

I like dealing with people. Just like I couldn't be stuck behind a desk as a secretary, I don't think I could be stuck in a room just designing something. I picture some engineers very isolated, wanting just to get into their own little world. Do I really think I would be good at just strict designing where you would sit down with your ideas, put them down on paper? Not really relating to people, just working with your thoughts? I would like to deal with people a little bit more. How can I combine the two? A valuable degree to have would be an engineering degree with an MBA. The market is just great because there they have an engineer who knows his stuff, can deal with people, knows the business world a little bit.

I think the doctorates are mainly for the engineers in the chemical, or possibly nuclear fields. I don't know too many people in business that have a doctorate. There really is no need to go on any further than an MBA . You sort of stop there. My father has his doctorate in microbiology, and I think of a doctorate as a scientist. Well, I don't see myself going after that, but you never know. Right now the master's is a question mark.

I think what I was trying to get at before was basically, one, myself academically, what the school did for me; and the other, what it did for my mind. It is pushing me on to a four-year school, teaching me things about myself and my education I never knew before. Because I am older I think that's another aspect of it. You have to separate things academically and socially, and whether you want to admit it or not, you are not just there for the academics. In that respect this college has meant a lot to me. I've met people that I will never forget here. One kid I know, just a real interesting kid, makes me smile whenever I see him, he is gone now and he is in veterinary school. The kind of kid who would come in in a jean jacket and very long hair, bandana, you know, always bucking the system. Yet he wants to go on to college for the next nine years and he knows that he is going to. He was in my first chemistry class. How do you explain something like that, where you have people like me who don't know and just sort of fumble their way through?

I talk to people that I can tell are bright, but maybe they don't do well because they haven't studied. And you really want to shake them and just say, "Look, you did this well and didn't study. Imagine if you study a couple of hours." I'll say something but I don't try to sound like a mother. I say it matter of factly, and I think they have heard it before. To one guy I mentioned that I had a motorcycle and I had a pistol license. He said, "You can't have one, you have to be twenty-one to have one," and finally he said, "How old are you anyway?" I told him that I was twenty-four and he was shocked, he couldn't even speak. He really couldn't. He was apologizing for things he had said off-color. Maybe when you are eighteen some one who is twenty-four seems a lot older. Kids that are eighteen today were born in about 1963. That to me seems unreal, I mean they were one year old when the Beatles came out or the president was shot. These kids don't even know the basics of life.

A friend of mine had a motorcycle. I used to go over to his house and he taught me how to drive it and then the opportunity came, I had the money, I bought one. I went down to the pistol club a couple of times. I had a shot gun and a rifle of my own so I was familiar with guns through boy friends in the past. So I felt very confident with a gun in my hand; pistols were a new thing to me. I got my pistol permit . I shot in a league one summer. I just don't even get the opportunity to go fishing. I love to fish and hunt. I've only been hunting with a gun in my hand twice for small game, never got anything. I enjoy being out in the woods with a gun in my hand.

I really wish I had more of a musical background. I really could use a couple of more writing courses, speech courses. Once I get through the engineering, if I do pursue the management, maybe I'll take some courses at night, take some music courses or some English.

I see my mother going back to school. She's taking a theology course right now at the university, so I can see myself doing that. I think she's enjoying it immensely and she's grown because of it. I really haven't had a lot of these liberal arts. I need some stimulation in that area. I will continue to try and round myself out as a person. I need a lot of rounding out, I have a lot of rough edges.

I definitely look forward to having children some day. I also look forward to having a time in my life when I'll have a career once they get older. I don't plan to stop. There is no reason why you can't go on after you have had children. I don't think I would want to leave my children at home right after they were born. I would like to stay with them for awhile. But I don't see that in the next couple of years, I am too caught up in school right now. I want a degree. I want something I feel is marketable. I can't just have children now. I have to make some money, you know. You want to feel that you're worth something.

Profile

SARAH DELLER

(Sarah Deller was thirty-three when she was interviewed at her home in the summer of 1981. She had recently completed a program in horticulture at a California community college.)

I guess my real childhood starts at the age of five when we moved from the East to California. My father was offered a teaching position at the university. I have two older brothers and a younger sister and we all went to the same public schools. When I was in seventh grade I went to school for a year in England; my parents were on a sabbatical, which I very much enjoyed. Came back into junior high, not really fitting in, and then in tenth grade I had a friend say to me one day that her father and some other people were starting a Quaker high school. The more she talked about it the more I thought there was no reason why I shouldn't go there. So I made a big change and went from a big multi-racial high school with three thousand kids to a small Quaker school on a farm with sixty kids . Things were very primitive, no science labs, no art rooms, no library. I spent two years there and then had to make a difficult adjustment to a big California university.

I started my first semester in college with a close friend from the high school. Our plans were to study hard for a year and then go to Antioch. That all kind of fell through. We didn't like the university and ended up transferring. I only spent one semester at [the first university] and then the last three and a half years at the university in my home town. My husband was still finishing his BA [we got married at the age of twenty] when I got what was advertised as a clerical job at the university, a job I very much enjoyed and had to leave when we went to the University of Minnesota in 1970 for my husband's graduate school. He didn't like the program there so we left after four months and came back to California. And at that point I got pregnant.

Bob was lucky enough to get a job with the Health Department, where he had worked part-time as a student. Shelley was a very shy child and I was very overprotective of her as a young mother. I was isolated and not very happy. I was very much into being a mother. A number of young women I knew were going to law school, graduate school, so I did feel a certain amount of pressure in terms of career. What am I going to do with myself? Nothing clicked out of college. Majored in sociology--my father had a Ph.D. in sociology. I took a very wide range of courses in college--I was just determined to kind of explore everything. Never did anything with my sociology degree, it was just something I figured it was easy to major in. I think when I went to college people weren't dropping out and exploring things as much as they are now so I just go right through and get a degree. When I had one young child and Bob was at work full-time and my friends were off doing their thing it was, you know--Help!--panic at the age of twenty-three. What do I do with my life? Bob decided to go back to graduate school and we moved to student housing right next to the university. We were close to where things were happening. Our second daughter was born the first year we were there. Still I was kind of wondering, yes, I have two young children, but what am I going to do?

At some point I took a class taught by a woman in the behavioral science department at the university, an extension class on "going back to school." It turned out I was by far the youngest woman in the class; nobody else of the age of twenty-four was panicked about going back into something, a lot of the women were in their forties and fifties. She had us do a lot of writing, fantasy careers, skills, interests, and a lot of talking. It started me focusing more on what I wanted to do. I really got down to some environmental design field. I think a lot of my design interests had been suppressed by the fact that my oldest brother is very artistic and to me he was the artistic child in the family and I wasn't. Another devastating thing was in seventh grade in England. They give you your place in the class and in art I was 29th out of thirty at which point I decided I had no artistic ability whatsoever, forget it. I had always been interested in architecture. My father was in the school of environmental design so I had been around architecture books and faculty and students quite a bit. I had always loved math, been way ahead of anybody else in my small high school. In fact, toyed with being a math major. Didn't do much beyond my freshman year in college.

So I started taking calculus at the university. Three mornings a week at eight o'clock I got my infant and three-year-old off to a neighbor and went to calculus for two semesters. Also took a very good environmental design course which I did very well in . I started thinking seriously of going to community college. There was a community college that had an environmental design department. So got myself set up in those courses. I went two days a week with an extremely long bus ride, a freeway bus ride two hours each way.

My husband has always been extremely supportive of anything that I wanted to do. He has had his graduate school and been the one to work full-time and had his career. He was flexible to cover the children or to do whatever needed to be done to help me. So I was very excited about this, loved my classes, had been going to classes for two months when (I say with somewhat of a shaky voice) my twenty-two-month-old daughter got extremely ill, was in a coma for three days in the hospital. She recovered but I dropped out of school completely and I just couldn't deal with it. She somehow got a reaction to a virus, was rushed unconscious to the hospital in the middle of the night and then was in the hospital a week and, of course, the next week was healthy and running around outside. I was still just totally in a state of shock. It had been too much, facing her death in the face literally and I completely backed out. That fall we decided to move again. We really decided that we wanted to be back where we had roots and I have a wonderful set of parents here and it was important for me to have my kids close to my parents. I felt grandparents were important to children's lives. So we came back, struggled for about six months and finally Bob did get a job at this university where he has been ever since. Right now he does crop inventory and does serial photographs . So coming back here (it must have been the fall of 1976) again I thought of community college. I knew of a wonderful woman who had a home, took ten kids. So I started back that fall at the community college taking architectural drafting. Also at the same time taking ecology courses and some biology and botany which I had never had.

Well, the ecology and the botany and the biology, I very much enjoyed those courses. Finally after three semesters of architectural drafting, I gave up on that. I should also say through all this I never really was a person who went out and worked and that has a lot to do, maybe, with my role model of my mother being home with her four children and my father having the career. We have lived on very little for a long time, our furniture is still undergraduate level after thirteen years of marriage. At this point of finally having bought a house and the children getting older I was more interested in earning money, but I have never really thought that much about getting jobs. I worked very little my whole life, to tell you the truth. So I dropped architectural drafting and then began looking at catalogues, trying to figure out what to do. I realized I was not going to be happy sitting around over the drafting table and to become an architect was a very long professional road. I didn't think I was motivated enough to do it.

Looking through another community college catalogue, I discovered a horticulture department. I hadn't gardened that much but while we were in student housing there was a big field next to the student housing complex which was divided up into garden plots that the students used. We had two plots. Those large plots were a very very important part of my life. I spent a great many hours out there, raised a lot of our food. But that was about all my gardening experience. I looked at the catalogue. I looked at the list of courses. Finally put the catalogue down for two months, picked it up again. Also I had heard of a woman who was a friend of a friend of somebody's who was teaching there part-time. That was one reason that I went there. She was more into biological gardening. I enrolled there.

I remember very clearly walking into a temporary classroom up on a hillside away from the rest of campus, very dusty and dry, and I sat down. My first class, and I had this incredible reaction. I just knew that this was what I wanted to do. I had never felt that way in any class before, even though I was overwhelmed because I started out (which was a mistake, they don't allow it anymore) taking two plant identification courses. I mean learning one hundred and twenty shrubs and one hundred and twenty ground covers I was overwhelmed by the Latin names. I just knew that this was it, and loved it from the minute that I started. The whole series of classes ended up taking me three years. Didn't like all the teachers, didn't like all the classes, but stuck with it. And feel like I really found something for life. I think people that are interested in plants, if you are really into it, you don't have to be working you know, you can be doing it at home. Not last year but the year before I was doing a lot of volunteer work. One of the kids' schools had an environmental playground. I spent weekends there, was starting to work as a gardener, was going to school in horticulture. It just became my life.

At this point I am kind of at a crossroads as to which direction I am going to go. I do have a small business with a partner, we do design and landscapings for residential yards. I am not sure that I am not more interested in plant propagation and going in a different direction. But I know that is what I am going to be doing when I am ninety-two years old. Finding that program and going to that community college was real significant, very very important—a turning-point in my life. It gave me an identity I had never had, made me feel better about myself, just a lot of things.

It has been a year since I finished school. My partner was on sabbatical the year before so I was just doing maintenance and taking care of yards while she was gone. There are gaps of a few weeks when we are not doing anything. Our income goes up and down, but basically it is a good part-time job for me. I am still very much into being available for my children who are seven and ten and I have to be here when they get home from school most days. Laura sometimes comes home with a key on her neck. They take classes, piano, dancing, art and stuff after school for which I do the mommy-chauffeur bit.

I was a good student. Towards the end of elementary school it was difficult because I was very tall. My mother had taught PE for a few years in college before she got married. My father is a rugged hiker. We often went hiking and camping when I was young. I was very athletic, in a lot of sports. Elementary school basically was good. I was pretty much of a leader, lived a few blocks from the elementary school. Everybody out in the evening playing big games of ball in the street. Our house was always filled with kids. It was very much mommy home and daddy teaching but it wasn't like a business man going off from six in the morning until seven at night. He walked to the university every day and he would be home at a reasonable time before dinner. He was very much a part of my upbringing.

Coming into a junior high where all the kids had already established all their friends, I hardly remember the classes and the teachers. I just became a sports person without being a tomboy. Occasionally when I would be after school doing some organized track thing I would look over and the old gym was the girls' gym of course, and the new gym was the boys' gym. When I got to the high school I was still hanging out at the gym, and I was still doing sports. I wasn't as happy then. And I wasn't doing that well in classes either. Much more than at the junior high level it was a jump into social clubs. It is like an L-shaped building and all the trade and secretarial classes were filled with the Blacks and I was in the pre-college courses and I was in all-white classes and I didn't really know how to deal with that in my mind. I had gone to a pretty much all-white junior high, the school in England had been all white, and my elementary school had been all white so that was my first introduction to really different races and cultures and not in an integrated situation which I found frustrating and awkward. These hundreds of other people that weren't in my classes and no way to relate to them, I didn't know whether I wanted to relate to them. I didn't really know how to deal with that.

I had always done real well up until then but I remember suddenly dropping to C's at the high school. Something was going on, I really can't tell you what it was. I studied for hours, but I didn't really know how to study. My absolute favorite course in tenth grade was an extremely difficult English course, the classical sixty-five-year-old English teacher who makes you write and when you have finished and turned it in and gotten it back you have to rewrite it and I remember reading Isak Dinesen and all these wonderful books. I loved that course; I didn't do that well in it, but I loved her, her expectations, so I was certainly willing to work if someone was willing to give me the feedback.

I had an interesting experience that year. I decided that I wanted to take an instrument. I was going to take the clarinet. There weren't enough instruments, so they said would anybody like to switch to a percussion instrument instead, and for who knows what reason I said, "Sure." You know, I think I always wanted to please and I wanted to please this teacher. I took a percussion class which consisted of about ten Black males and me. And we developed this very interesting relationship over the course of the year. Most of them quite frankly couldn't read music and I could. I had several years of piano and I had a good sense of rhythm and stuff. Couldn't roll the drums at all which they could, so we developed this very complementary thing, where I usually did the bass drum and they did all the jazzy stuff. Never saw those guys outside of this percussion class but continued for a whole year and I am not sure why except that I enjoyed it for some reason.

I was able to go away to the Quaker School. Even though going to the Quaker School led to other problems , I became very well liked, had good grades, and was a leader, just fit right in beautifully. (I think the high school was just too big for me to relate to. Because the same thing happened when I went back to the university. I fumbled around, never really got into it the way I wanted to.) Envision driving down this dirt road, then looking down at a set of buildings, a chicken coop that was turned into a library and two classrooms. The old barn was converted into a dining hall which, between meals, was used for everything else. One small new low-cost dormitory building, girls on the bottom floor, boys on the top floor, and a wing where the principal and his wife and kids lived. Teachers had a couple of trailers and everybody wore levis and bare feet. It was back to relating to boys as boys, which I had always done with my brothers and their friends instead of whatever I felt in eighth and tenth grade where boys suddenly were something else other than people. I loved the physical work which I since have come back to in my landscaping. (Between me and my partner I am the one that designs and does more of the construction of our retaining walls and that kind of stuff.) We all were expected to do a certain number of hours a week of work. I usually worked outside. There were enough interesting books in the small library that a lot of Quakers all over the state had donated. I was brought up in the Unitarian thing. It was not a pre-requisite to be a Quaker. I never became a Quaker but still feel very much a spiritual kind of thing with them.

Through college I had no concept or no thought of going out and finding a job. I was going through college, I was a student. You get your liberal arts degree and then I don't know what I was going to do, I didn't think of it. It turned out that I got married. Which doesn't mean you stop your life but it was somebody who maybe was going to support me, although I wasn't certainly marrying for that reason. Going to college wasn't really a choice, it was go to college. I did apply to several colleges. The only one I got into was the university. I went to my chemistry teacher my senior year and said, "What do I do to get an A in this class? I really want to get good grades, I don't know if I have got into the university yet." He just looked at me and he said, "I think you would be much happier at State College." And I think he was right, but to me a state college was a step down and a professor's daughter, you know, you go to the university, that is what you do. I have my BA from the university but maybe it would have worked out better if I had gone to a smaller state school. I don't know.

When I was going to go to the university with my friend, I was immediately thrown in with three girls who arrived with suitcases and clothes. Here I was, I had been up in the country, literally wading through the mud or the dust wearing levis. We had to wear skirts to dinner, you know, those were the rules. I had to quick sew a couple of skirts. I loved the campus. I loved the bike riding, but I never got into the scene. The one group I related to was the Unitarian college group which met Sunday evening and the minister happened to play the guitar and it felt like my high school. It had good discussions and there was a closeness there that was totally lacking anywhere else. I was very unhappy by the end of one semester at college and retreated to Mommy and Daddy. Moved in with them for the rest of my freshman year.

Math had always been my love through all of school, elementary, junior high and high school. I started calculus at the university and dropped out. I never got back into math. At certain levels you realize that it gets complex and demanding and I wasn't that interested in it. I decided on sociology. I think it was just a major I could get through, it was somehow acceptable to me. I never really considered any other majors. You see, at that point I didn't even consider the environmental science field. I think I would have been scared off by the design aspect, feeling that I wasn't creative enough. It has taken me a long time to convince myself that I'm creative and that there are a lot of different aspects of being creative.

This is the part of my upbringing that I understand the least. And I don't blame my parents for it. I just think that it is incredible that given how much concern and energy and love they put into all their children, that there wasn't more discussion with us about what we were going to do.

It amazes us that we got married at twenty. We both had not been very experienced socially with other people, really first love for both of us. It has just worked out, we have been lucky I guess. He was sharing a big three-bedroom house, one guy in each bedroom, and it seemed natural to me to move in there. It just wasn't a big step for me. I just had one basket of clothes, one basket of books. My parents were concerned about this big step, about each of us, that we wanted to go to graduate school and my father in fact did say, "If Bob wants to go to graduate school, is this going to block any of your choices?"

There are a lot, especially in the field that I ended up in, there are a lot of people with B.A.'s and master's degrees going back to school. I think the community college offered programs that were really more tuned in to what I wanted to do, they weren't as academic . I saw it also as a way of being able to explore at my own pace, take as many classes or as few classes as I wanted in certain fields and then if I did ever want to go back to graduate school I could do that. In fact, there is a master's program at Antioch-West in horticulture. I may end up going back to graduate school in this field. But I think I just felt like I was starting over. I did find out that there was a three-year master's program in architecture at the university but I don't think I was really prepared to go into that kind of competitive professional situation. I think it has very high standards. I am not really sure that I am all up to that.

My main impression of the community college I attended only for about six weeks was I thought it was very sexist. It was clearly geared towards young males who are going on mostly in architecture and I felt that the women were kind of pooh-poohed. One of the courses was a design course and I would say if you really sat down and counted minutes spent with each student, there was a lot more attention given to the male students than to the female students. It seemed to me very striking when I went a couple of years later and started architectural drafting that there weren't very many women in the classes. The men were the eighteen-, nineteen-, and twenty-year-olds who were going through community college in architectural drafting and I think the women like myself were dropping in and out, not relating to it in the same way.

Going back to school that second time I was really geared toward something that was going to lead toward work, as well as finding a field I really enjoyed. I think I had always felt that lack of having a field. All my friends really have specific professional fields. People do get somewhat identifiable with what they do and I really felt that for a long time I was the mother, the great mother figure for everybody. I realized that was just one part of me, of what I wanted to do and be. I went there during the day and came back but realized it was going nowhere. What does going nowhere mean? It wasn't going to lead to a job. I didn't see what I was going to do except sit over a drafting table. I could be, with a lot of practice, probably an excellent draftswoman but that was not what I wanted to do. So I dropped out of that program. I guess I really felt limited to going to school right around here. I didn't feel like I could uproot my family or indeed that I wanted to. The first five or six years of our marriage we moved very often. We were eager to settle down here and stay.

When I was going to community college I was running into these people and saying, "What are you doing, I'm going to community college," and at first kind of mumbling under my breath, and then, after I realized that it was really okay to be going and it was important to me, talking probably in a different tone of voice. People that know me now I think have respect for what I have done and know that I am trying to do my own business with another woman. They are interested in the path I've chosen which is different from most of them. There is the other side of it, that it is not difficult to stay home with children, you know. You don't have to be out there facing the rigors of careers and graduate school. It is what I wanted to be doing but it also allowed me to just kind of watch everybody else have to deal with the outside world and I could live my own quiet domestic life .

My third semester I took a course from someone I hadn't taken a course from before, a practicing architect, and I was more excited by that course than the previous ones. But at the same time it was demanding of me much more work. I was not motivated to really work and though I am good in math and good enough in drafting I found myself putting it off in terms of getting the work done. And so I dropped that course. The fact that I wasn't willing to put in the time was a message to me. That it wasn't working out. And I wasn't feeling good about it. I really at that point was tearing my hair out, like what am I going to do? I am just never going to somehow get myself together enough to end up doing something that is other than just a job. I knew I could go out and get just a job. I filled the void with finding another catalogue and going on.

It was called "ornamental horticulture" at that point. They changed the name to "landscape horticulture." Just to look at the catalogue, it didn't sound that interesting: trees, shrubs, vines, turf management, pest controls, licenses-- it really seemed like it was geared toward someone who was going to take care of golf courses or cemeteries or something. I didn't know anybody in the program, went in and sat down. Very mixed group of people, men and women from eighteen to sixty-eight, some older women who were interested in gardening. Half of the classes would meet in the classroom and half of the classes would be outdoors. Well, I had been brought up in a very outdoor family, walking and hiking, and it just seemed very natural to me to be learning in the outdoors. Basically I had spent my whole life in classrooms and to be out in the field just seemed wonderful to me. I mean this is learning, you walk around and look at plants and talk and it just seemed ideal and I realized I was learning a lot having started from very little plant knowledge. I was very proud of being able to walk around and say to my husband, "This is this plant and this is this plant." It was like my knowledge suddenly and also it related to my husband because he has taught geography at the community college level and had always talked a lot about plant communities. It's become something that my whole family relates to. I like that part of it. It's not just something that I do that is separate from my house and family. My oldest daughter spent a great deal of time testing me on plant names, over the course of three years. I thought it was good for her to understand what I was doing and I talked a lot to her about being a woman and having brought up the kids and going back to school .

The second year I was there the school continued to approve the building of the new horticulture complex up on this hillside. Then the third year I was back into this brand-new facility—a large greenhouse, one room connected with thirty drafting tables, potting shed, one large building just full of horticultural equipment. It attracted many more students, many more women coming into the program. Hired new staff, and I was very much a part of that. In a way it was similar to my high school experience on a farm. The head of the department and I often sat down and talked about the program. When new staff would come in I would know more about what was happening than they would. It was a feeling of some permanence, having been there for three years. And taking almost every course that I could possibly fit into my schedule. It is a two-year program. I took extra courses. I hurt my back once and had to slow down that semester. I just took longer. Lots of people did take longer going through the program.

The head of the department was a very good person, a little bit older than I am, very straight, religious, but extremely interested in teaching and very interested in being fair to all his students. He had fairly high standards in his classes which I enjoyed but was always willing to spend the time to explain anything to a student, no matter how simple, that they didn't understand. I was older than some of the students, although [some were] certainly older than I was. A lot of them were in their twenties. I was a straight A student.

Having a B.A. or being married and having children is something that sometimes you bring up in discussion and sometimes you don't. There were a number of people that had B.A.'s and were going back. I think it is part of the alternative movement of carpenters and these self-employed part-time fields that appealed to a certain number of people. The programs had been attracting more women and women were bringing their friends. I think the women who came into the program really enjoyed the social atmosphere and the people they were meeting. I think the men were more individuals coming into the field. It was about fifty-fifty men and women by the time I left. Having a B.A., I usually explained, was something that happened to me a long time ago and I had my children and I was coming back and it seemed like a perfectly logical explanation to other people.

I tried to be extremely competitive for myself but not at all competitive against other people in terms of grades. It was important for me to do well you know, for whatever reasons. As much as I can tell myself it is stupid to be hung up on grades, to me it was an indication that I was really putting a lot into the program and I wanted to get those grades. I never felt good at all about grades at the university so it was important and I did get straight A's except for one B in three years. I really tried to say to people, "I just want to do well for myself." And I certainly did my share of trying to help other people and be cooperative and study with other people before exams because I wanted other people to do well. So having a B.A. I think other people may have used as an excuse for my good grades. Which may have been true-- certainly I had been through four years of college-- but other than that it really wasn't significant.

I think any woman who came into the program and started taking classes found it a very comfortable group to be in. Maybe about fifty percent were just taking classes in horticulture and getting that certificate the way I did and fifty percent were also taking classes to get an AA degree. You might be in three classes with the same person one semester, so you get to know each other real fast. I certainly knew, towards the end, the names of most of the students. And there is time between classes; there is a small library and there is a nice courtyard and people would hang out and talk. We car pooled and shared rides when we went to various botanical gardens so there was a lot of time to socialize. Many times I would encourage people to hang in there, if they were discouraged, because it was their first semester and they were having a course from a terrible teacher. People would talk a lot about their jobs and that was an important part of the learning too. I would not have had the confidence to go out and even be a gardener I think, let alone be designing yards and doing what I am doing now, if I hadn't had the experience of listening to a lot of people talking about their experiences. Kind of finding out what the job was all about.

The core courses were all about the plant; the program's strongest point is plant identification. There are about five courses and you probably go over about six hundred plants. And then insects and diseases, kind of care and culture, disease problems, and actual identification. People could go from the program into working in a nursery because they knew the plants. I didn't really think of myself taking care of people's yards until I met other college-educated men and women who were out taking care of people's yards. In the beginning I would always emphasize more that I was designing yards and putting in new landscaping which I was doing less of in the beginning and more of just going around and taking care of people's yards. Now, in fact, I am doing more designing and landscaping , but I don't mind telling people that I am taking care of yards. To me it is a perfectly okay way to make a living. I make a good hourly wage. I can set my own hours. I can just run off in my truck and do it. I have always thought that people, especially a lot of professionals, are lacking in the doing aspect of what they are. I always thought landscape architects sit at the drafting table and design and never get out in the garden. I was taking architectural drafting and talking with other women about all the architects and their egos and the way they design kitchens and they have never been a housewife and been in the kitchen. So I like the fact that I am taking care of people's yards. And some of the yards I take care of, we have put in, so I like to just follow the whole process. You design them, you put them in, and you take care of them and you see where you failed and what works well, and it is a very total thing that I do.

Every semester was different. One semester I was taking four or five courses. Other semesters I would be taking two or three. The kids were three and six when I started. The youngest one had started at the university child-care center when she was one and a half. They have a big school of education and they use a lot of the students to run the nursery school which is right next door to where we were living in student housing. Shelley had started when she was three and they were taking some siblings so Laura started a few hours a day. When we moved I knew a woman whom I liked very much who was taking about eight or ten kids at her home every day. Her hours were 9:30 to 3:30 so it was with some reluctance I started Laura in that program. Well, she really liked it and you know, as much as I had been used to being the mother, and my oldest was extremely shy and very attached to me, I think part of it was my fault for not socializing her as much.

Eight o'clock classes are always a problem. I did everything I could to trade child care for late afternoons or early mornings. We have never paid a baby sitter. I never paid besides the regular nine-to-three program Laura was in. My husband was very supportive. He was able to go in at nine o'clock some mornings so I could get to an eight o'clock class. Basically it was juggling home and getting housework done and doing school. One semester I felt very on the go and tired and rushed but you see I was doing something that I really wanted to do. I was really enjoying it. There was never any question of dropping out or not going to classes. I just really stuck with it. It means buying food at night. That semester was like women who work from eight to five. On top of that it was really important to study a certain amount; not only studying that I could do at night but I had to get out and look at plants, so sometimes I had to get to the botanical gardens. I have to do laundry in the morning because I only have a clothes line so I get up before the kids, get the laundry on the lines, start breakfast, wake them up. There is no way around it, kids are slow in the morning. They are slow all the time and it is difficult when you are in a hurry and you are rushed. So you learn to pace things. Bob can do most things just extremely well around the house and the kids and he cooks meals. But in terms of pacing things, and taking care of all the emotional needs of children, I have always felt it was important that we sit down to breakfast and we talk about the day. And in the afternoon when they are home we sit down together and have a snack and we talk about school . So, in the morning— wake up the kids, rush them a little bit to get them dressed, go make your lunches, all that stuff, sit down and have breakfast. Then drop them wherever they need to be dropped. Always take a bag lunch. I'd try to have morning classes more than afternoon classes. One semester I had a class that got out at two, when Shelley was getting out of school, and I mean I would be just sitting there with my books and the minute class was over I would run to the car and drive straight home in order to pick her up on time.

Part of studying horticulture is like taking a trip to the moon and being exposed to something totally new. It wasn't anything that I grew up with. Even though I had been hiking and camping for years and out in the woods neither of my parents had ever pointed out anything more than a redwood. It is also something that nobody else I knew was into. I didn't have to compete with anybody else. It wasn't like going to law school and medical school or English, I mean there are nundreds of English graduate students. Immediately when I started taking the classes I got positive feedback from my friends and neighbors and family about my new knowledge and every little bit of new knowledge I had people were interested in. It is also exciting to be able to just go for a walk and to reaffirm your knowledge. I can walk around and know what all these plants are. You think of how many years you just walked around and looked at these things. I always loved looking at plants, but never thought of trying to identify anything. I think it was working on a lot of different levels. It was the subject, it was also the school situation, I felt comfortable with the people. I found this over and over again when I have done volunteer work for the native plant society or have worked at the environmental playground with the kids. I like people that are working with plants. I don't know if there is a horticulture personality. Both logically and emotionally I think I really felt that I had found my thing.

I don't think it was particularly important that I went to a community college, I think it could have been any college or any going back and retraining. The fact that I found a field and developed a certain field of knowledge that I now have for the rest of my life was very important. Some of the motivation and some of the enjoyment of the experience I'm sure came from the fact that it was a community college and it was a particular setting and a particular group of people. Twenty years from now what is important is that I got the knowledge, not that I had fun talking to people between classes. What is very important is the self-confidence. I think that is a key to the success of the experience. Not only did I get the knowledge but I got a feel for where I fit into the field. I got a feel for going out and working and how well-prepared I was compared with other people in the field .

That was a real good time for me to really change my sense of self. My kids were three and six when I started and six and nine when I left. When you get up to six and nine they both are in elementary school and they are developing a strong sense of self and becoming their own people and so it was a good time for all three of us to establish different daily patterns for our lives and become involved with other things rather than simply a mother-child relationship. It was a time when we were settling down for the first time, having our first house, having moved and moved and moved. My husband was finding his first kind of career job on his career ladder. So in all aspects of my life it was a time of change and a good time. Feeling like I was getting on with life and things were settling down and this was more what life should be about. It was probably the first time in years when I had been doing something that was very meaningful to me.

I certainly had put out a lot for my kids and my husband in the past. Our moves were based on his going to graduate school and consideration about where we would move so he could find a job, and certainly a lot of naturally giving to the kids and flexibility for them. My time schedule was their time schedule for many years. So this was the first thing that I did where I said, "This is what I am going to do. I have an eight o'clock class next semester, everything else has to give because I am going to that eight o'clock class." Or, "I'm not getting home until 5:30 on such and such a day, and I'm willing to do whatever I have to do to work it out, but that's what is going to happen." That's good for kids, that's good for the rest of the family too, to be supportive of me after I have been supportive of them.

The extension class I took at the university when I was twenty-three on going back to careers and going back to school had a lot of women in their late thirties, forties, fifties. And I was just stunned at the things they said about their spouses in terms of the resistance and the attitudes, the non-cooperation. I was really amazed and I have never experienced any of that. I had enough options so that it worked out easily. In fact, I put out a lot to make it work out. I mean, I traded child care and I did other things to make it work out okay. I worked out what happened with the kids, but I made sure that people knew it was really important to me. I have never been much for cooking dinners so I could just get home late. My husband started cooking a lot more dinners during the week at that point, a pattern which we still follow. We both cook about half the dinners every week. I have always been assertive about what I want and my needs too. The thing in the past was I was having trouble figuring out what my needs were. I couldn't find anything that was really important to me. Also I wouldn't have left really young children and done what I did. They were old enough and I was sure that they were in good child care situations.

There wasn't a graduation [in my community college program]. The head of the department would bring in the certificates to the last final exam that most of the students were taking. He would call them up one by one and they would talk about what they were going to do now and everybody would clap. So that was the extent of finishing. I was really ready to go. It had been a long time of going to school and I had started working so I was eager to get on with that. It wasn't difficult to get out of that pattern of going to classes.

I had very high attendance. It would have been easy to skip classes. Certainly in a semester in a community college you can skip a lot of classes and make it through, but I decided that I was just not going to mess around, I was going to do it right. Heaven forbid I should drop out of anything else and try to start over! I think I had had enough of taking a class here and there, floundering. At the university it was more like a job that you don't enjoy. It was getting up in the morning and going to classes and doing the studying, often at the library or coming home. I never really seriously considered where it was going, what I was going to do after. I think it was more like a difficult extension of high school for me. So it was very different from [this program at] the community college which was a very conscious decision, doing it for a purpose, enjoying all the courses relating to each other and enjoying the people. It was a completely different experience. I got my B.A. when I had just turned twenty-one and I don't think at that point I was mature enough or thought about myself enough really to know what my weaknesses and strengths were, what I was really interested in. It took me until I was thirty to figure it out. I was the last year and a half in the process of falling in love and getting married and that was much more important to me.

Intellectually I definitely was more challenged at the university, but I didn't care. Even when I did really well in a class or wrote a really good paper, I guess it was some sense of satisfaction but no real pleasure in it, maybe just this vague concern about keeping my grade-point average above being totally disgraceful. I realize that I was, in fact, not that interested in intellectual things. I had an intellectual father and I had always my whole life wanted to please my father. On the other hand I was willing to assert myself and say, "I definitely want to transfer, I am not going to finish out the year." My parents wanted me to finish out the year. I certainly was willing to assert myself and go against their wishes when I felt it was important enough. I have always felt that with all four of their children they would have been very pleased if one of them had gone on and done graduate work.

This was my third go at community college and I had taken a few courses at the university and I had tried to make an effort in the last ten years to talk to my parents about it. Kind of let them know what was going on with me. I'm trying this, I'm trying that. I think for a long time my father took it as a housewife searching for something to do with her time. As I got into the program and he could see that I was much happier and then when I had a partner he became much more interested and supportive and excited about what I am doing. He would probably like me to become a landscape architect, because he is still very much tied to the academic world. I have convinced him that I am not interested in just doing the academic thing, but in becoming more of a professional in my field.

And that is something for me to work out too because, for a long time, it seemed to be just so important somehow for me to get a master's degree. There was some mystique about it. I can see that it is not that important. I know plenty of people with Ph.D.'s that aren't necessarily doing better than I am. It certainly isn't that important in my field. As a landscape architect you would only draw up plans and you would give them to a landscape contractor to do all the planting and supervision.

This summer we did a big planting for some big new townhouses, very expensive units and the designs were done by a landscape architect who turned out to be a woman of my age that remembered me from when we worked together waiting on tables at the Faculty Club when we were students at the university. So here is a woman who obviously had gone through landscape architecture. I think, in fact, that she teaches at the university. We did not think that her design was very good. It was very professionally drawn up. We disagreed with some of her choices of plants. We really felt that she didn't know her plants that well, that design-wise it was possibly good, but her choice of plants wasn't good. She was talking to us and really seemed to respect what we were saying about the plants. I think she sensed that we had more working experience, all she does is do the design. Landscape architects tend to deal with bigger projects, too, and we really specialize in yards.

I think it was a good program in the community college. I can't compare it to other programs of its kind, I really don't know. A lot of students went through the program and were able to find employment. For a community college program it had a lot to offer. It is true, I did say, "for a community college." I guess growing up I have always felt that community colleges did not have as high academic standards as most four-year colleges or universities. But I can see that is changing too, for financial reasons mostly. There are a lot more very good students going to community colleges, and I have a feeling that is probably changing the level of classes. There were times when I had to remind myself that this was a community college and when I was feeling frustrated that the class was going too slow or somehow people weren't putting in enough effort, I had to remind myself I wasn't in graduate school. To me it was going back to school and I already had a B.A. and clearly it wasn't graduate school.

In some ways it felt like a step backward. Although I was fortunate that there were a lot of people like me going back; it would have been a different experience if there had been a lot of people who were just starting college for the first time. It was a step backwards because of my upbringing and because of my friends whom I had watched go on to graduate and professional schools. I think I had viewed community college generally as a step backwards for me intellectually, the classes would be easier, the students wouldn't have had as much schooling. But the fact that it was a whole new field to me and I was really starting out with the other students at ground level made it not a step backwards.

I had difficulty, at times, in dealing with people that I would run into. "What do you do? You are going to community college?" I felt a little embarrassed at first. Then when I was able to speak with more enthusiasm about the program and felt really good about what I was doing, then I didn't feel that embarrassment . That is where they offered the program and that is where I went. The program became so important to me that instead of just saying, "I'm going to community college," I could say, "I'm taking a program in landscape horticulture," and talk a litle bit about the program. I think basically my father would much rather have had me go on to graduate school but you see, his wife had just finished three years of graphic design at a community college. But there may have been a difference in his mind of a sixty-year-old woman who had always been a housewife going and getting all these skills, and me, looking more for a career. You know, it is complicated.

I also was very concerned through the whole program that I was going to be able to make money when I got out. Increasingly towards the end of the program I became very concerned about job and earning money. I really felt it was time that I put a little into the household. Well, part of it was simply not wanting to be supported by my husband. We needed more money, kids were getting older, and also just the satisfaction of earning money. I still get a great deal of pleasure out of getting a check from somebody. It is very satisfying to me. Maybe because it means that somebody feels that the work that I am doing has some value. Still, at this point, I am not earning much. But I am so interested in what I am doing, I am determined to make a go of being self-employed and making enough money this way. Who knows what enough is? There are a lot of days when I don't work, there are a lot of days that I am home. I don't ever see myself as earning a full professional salary, comparable to my husband. I don't think I am in a field where I would be able to get a full-time professional position. Right now the type of work I am doing is so physically demanding that I can't work more than a certain amount of hours a day, five hours a day is good. Last January, February, and March we were putting in a lot of new yards and I was so physically exhausted every night I could not even get off the couch to make dinner. I like working part-time. That may change as the kids get older and I will still be young when they leave home. I am starting to get restless. I do envision something else happening in the future. It may indeed be going back to school and getting more education in this field.

I justify what I have done somehow with my children which is partly a cop-out, on the other hand it is not. I am happy I put the amount of time and energy I did into those two kids. Possibly I could also have been going to professional school . I was extremely impatient within myself in my twenties. I really kind of felt this split person, this person that was very much a mother. I nursed both my kids and they never had a baby bottle, I mean I never left those children, they were with me all the time. It was just really important. But then there was always this part of me that was very impatient and felt that everybody's passing me by, everybody else was doing it except for me. I kind of look around and here we are, we own our home, we have these two lovely children and I can see something happening in the future and I am much more patient. I have a totally different perspective on my life. I am only thirty-three-- there is a lot of time. My husband just started his second master's degree and I jokingly said, "Great, you have got three years and then maybe I will go back to school." So I am still open for exploring but I feel more patient and I am willing to let time pass by a little bit.

I am beginning to think that it is going to be necessary to go back to school. That has started in the last few months, starting to occur to me more and more that I need to get more education in some aspect of this field that I have gotten a good introduction to. But there is a country woman in me. When I can, I bake alot of bread and make our own sprouts, always put the laundry on the line and plant a lot of fruit trees. Part of me has this dream of having a nursery in the country. I feel now a need to continue earning, more than I am earning now. I couldn't really go back into a full-time school thing. I'm not ready to, I really want to work some more. I need to explore exactly what I want to go back into. Because, in fact, the community college opened up all these doors.

Profile

MARTA MELENDEZ WILSON

(Marta Melendez Wilson, thirty-eight, was a student in a California community college in the two-year nursing program. She was interviewed at her home in January ,1982.)

I'm one of eleven children and I'm seventh born so there are six ahead of me. All my brothers and sisters are living now and all within this county. My youngest brother was born two months before my father passed away. As our family went along, the oldest one supported the family. Each one of my older brothers and sisters would support the family until they married and moved away, and I did the same thing. When I was born we were living in a little town. There weren't any Catholic schools there and my father was really really intent on getting us a Catholic education. So we moved to another town because there's a Catholic school there. I think I was three or four years old when we moved. My father was a carpenter and supported all of us. I'm not sure what all the reasons were but I know he tried to get us into the Catholic schools and I think he was told that there wasn't room. My father died in the summer before I was in the seventh grade and the pastor of our church came to visit my mother and saw all these kids and wondered why they weren't in the school. And my mother told him, "You had no room." Right then and there he made room for me. I started to school right away that September and the next year my sister started who was younger than me. From that point on we were in the Catholic schools. It was very different from the public schools that I had been in.

I didn't have any friends in the public school. I went to the Catholic school and as soon as I got there there were two girls that immediately made me their friend. We walked to and from school with each other and did homework together . The nuns that were teaching there also took an interest in me. In that town it is about ninety-nine percent white and so we were in the real minority in the public school. I think there were three families that were Mexican, there were no Black people at all, there were some Hawaiians. When I got to the Catholic schools I and my mother's friend's daughter were the only Mexicans there. There were a lot of Portuguese, but that was different than being Mexican.

In the public school I wasn't part of it, it seemed. The teachers didn't take an interest in me. I was a good student but

I never was very outgoing. I remember when I was in the first grade, there was another little girl that was Mexican. She couldn't speak English and one day she was crying and crying. Other students tried to find out why she was crying and would call me over and I really didn't speak Spanish. My father wanted all of us to speak Spanish but my mother said no, how am I ever going to learn English if everyone speaks Spanish at home. So there was this tug of war going on at home and my mother won. We got to speak English most of the time so I didn't really speak Spanish as a child. I can understand it but I don't speak it very well. I was a little self-conscious that I was already different. I didn't think I could interpret for her and I didn't want to. It turned out that she had wet her pants and that's why she was crying. I just kind of held back. I didn't want to be a part of her. We were different because, well, we were Mexican. It wasn't cool to be a Mexican but somewhere along the way we got a good strong feeling of identity from my father, my mother, from somewhere. You're Mexican. I remember kids asking me, "Are you Spanish?" And I'd always say, "No, I'm Mexican." "But that's the same thing, isn't it?" I'd say, "No, it's not." Everyone was trying to pull off that they were Spanish rather than Mexican. We never did that.

My mother was always afraid that we would embarrass the family in some way or other. She didn't like us associating with white kids or going to their homes. "You'll do something to embarrass yourself or embarrass me or something." Neither my mother or father finished fifth grade. They were both born in Mexico and they met in California. My father's father would come and stay with us for periods of time and he would tell us stories in Spanish . Some of the folk tales and things. We always seemed to have people staying with us. There were so many of us that we grew up in the hall. Had two bedrooms and the front room was used as a bedroom and there it was really kind of crowded. I guess we didn't notice it so much until we were in high school. There was the basement. The plan was, because my father was a carpenter, he would redo the basement. Well, he never did. Even with the unfinished walls we had people staying down there. Two of his sisters lived there with their families at different times and we had another family living there a while. My uncle always used to stay with us. It was all my father's family because my mother's family were in Mexico. I remember sharing a twin bed with my sister even through high school. I know my mother and father had a bedroom of their own and there was always a baby crib so there were, you know, beds all over, bumped heads and toes.

None of my brothers ever finished high school. My sisters did but my brothers quit high school and started working. My oldest brother did go into the service. He was there when my father died. He did come home for a while but he could never tolerate us. I don't think he could ever forgive my parents for having ten kids after him. All my brothers are carpenters, and even some of their children. Well, it's a good business and some of them work together.

The girls all graduated from high school, and I'm the first and only one to go on to college. My oldest sister did get her beautician license and worked before she got married. Another sister worked at clerical work until she married. Another sister, older than me, she's working as a teacher's aide at one of the Catholic schools and she's really happy with what she's doing. One sister works for IBM and my youngest sister works in one of the county hospitals doing clerical work. So we've all done something. My mother lives with my sister that's a teacher's aide. She has six children and just had a baby at age forty so my mother takes care of their house and that little baby and loves it. Just really loves it, and she's active in her church and has lots of friends.

There is a double standard in our culture, you know, where girls get educated and boys it doesn't matter. There is a double standard all the way through about what's allowed for boys and what isn't allowed for girls. Education isn't--the word is--macho. You go out, like my father was a carpenter. What else is there for the girls? "Be good girls and go on through high school." We never talked about going on to college. Mexicans didn't do that. There was a family that lived down the block behind us and one of their sons went on to a community college. My mother thought, "Who do they think they are, going on to college?" You just didn't do that. There wasn't any encouragement from the school.

There was one incident in public school, I can't remember which grade. I did really well in reading and spelling. I knew that I did. And one time I missed two words on a test. Immediately they gave me another student to tutor me. I know that I spell better than her, why are they giving this to me? Yet I couldn't say anything because I was too shy. I had in my mind that it was because I was Mexican. This girl that was to tutor me, she was so nasty. "Why can't you get this? Why are you so dumb?"

Because I was so quiet people kind of made fun of me, or took advantage of me. I didn't know how not to be that way. When I got to the other school, and those two girls, it was really different. They accepted me, that was the difference I mean, they didn't see me as different because I was Mexican. We always looked different. We were always the darkest ones. My mother did not speak English very well. I remember going to the doctor and the doctor was kind of talking down to her and I couldn't do anything. I really was feeling strongly: Mom, don't let him talk like that. But I couldn't do anything. We got a feeling, you know, that we had to watch our step.

At the Catholic school I was a good student and received lots of encouragement. The people talked to me and there were even a couple of boys that liked me. I mean, it was really different. They were interested in me, in what a public school was like, they'd never been. In order to go to a Catholic high school you have to take a test and pass. And so I decided to take the test for St. Catherine's high school. There was another high school that had a reputation for being upper class or college prep and I thought, "I don't want to try that one." I wanted to go to St. Catherine's, anybody could go there. I was the only girl that passed the test. I remember the principal calling me on the phone and congratulating me. Because of the results of my test I was put into the college prep class, and once I got to high school I found out that I was the only Mexican in the college prep. 1956 was when I went to high school. I remember talking to other students about their experience in school and how the Black kids that were in their graduating class, their teachers suggested that they not go to their graduation dance. You see, Mexicans are more acceptable than Blacks. There was even intermarriage going on between Mexicans and whites. I mean, it was different, but not outcast different. There was just one Black fellow in my class and I think maybe three in the rest of the school. One girl in my class was a mixture--she was black and white. She called herself French Creole, she would never say she was Black. So she was my friend, and an Italian girl. I would see them during breaks and lunch, but I was in college prep in my classes. Even then I don't remember getting encouragement to go on to college.

The college prep students all got Latin, the other students got Spanish. I got Latin and after my first year I didn't feel I knew Spanish that well and I went to the principal and I said, "I want to take Spanish because I can use it more and I don't know it that well." And he said, "Uh huh, you know Spanish already, you take Latin." I remember at the time thinking, okay, I'll stay, but to my friends: "He won't let me." That was positive, I mean, that he wouldn't let me out.

In high school I was on the honor roll the first year. That was the only time. I didn't try so hard later because my other group of friends were not into school. They weren't good students and I was a part of them, not a part of this college prep group. Yeah, I didn't want them to think that I was trying to be better than them.

I did have a part-time job. I worked in the dime store my senior year and I was paying all my expenses. We never had to pay tuition once they found out that my mother had so many kids. When my mother would send tuition money they would send it right back. There was social security and then my sister was working and my brother was working. There were usually two of us working to support the family before one left to get married. My mother was always proud to say we never had to go on welfare.

My sister a few years older was always kind of encouraging to me. She was the only one that would encourage me about school. My mother never gave me any attention . She would always seem so overwhelmed with everything that all she could do was the physical stuff, all the cooking and all the cleaning, not much anything else. Not much emotional support and I really felt it at the time. But as I grew up I could see how overwhelming things must have been.

I remember in senior year I did take a test to see where you fit in, what you do best at. My results came out office work and I already knew I was going to do that, just because my sisters before me had, two of my sisters. In my junior year I did take some office courses like shorthand and typing and knew enough to work when I got out of school. I remember the counselor said, "Yeah, you should go into office work," and I remember having a feeling, of course you wouldn't encourage me to do anything else. My friends were all encouraged to go on to college, all the others in my college prep. And they were all talking about going to college. No one discouraged me but no one encouraged me. It was like, why bother to think about it? I just didn't think it was for me. I didn't know any other Mexicans that had gone on to school, except for that neighbor of ours, so who does he think he is? You don't need it, don't bother.

I got a job with accounting as a stenographer and I worked for the probation department. Soon after I got that job I was dating a fellow who was working in a supermarket but was going to night school and he was telling me about his classes. He said to me, "Why don't you go to school with me?" At that instant I realized that I had a choice. It was like--bopp!-- I can do it, why not? I was still eighteen and I had only been out of school for a little while. It took me sixteen years. I was thirty-four. Well, actually I did take a semester right after I was married.

I was twenty-one when I got married. I was working as a stenographer and I met my husband. He was a probation officer. He was a college graduate and he had a good job and I told him, very soon after I met him, that someday I was going to school. When we decided to get married he said, "You should go."
We also wanted a family so I said, "Okay, I'll go to school, and my mother can take care of the kids." I was at home, working for over a year, and I thought, I want to leave because I was trying to gain some independence. My brothers even as youngsters would go out and play and would come back at dinner time. The girls were always around the house. We didn't go out unless we had a specific place to go to. I started to assert myself. I'm working and I'm giving my mother money and I'm going to have some independence now. I don't have to ask her, I would just tell her, this is where I'm going. I wanted to go and have a place of my own. I knew other women that were doing that. One of the girls that I was working with in the office said they needed a fourth person. "I've got to do it," I said, "I'm moving." Within two weeks I was out of the house. My mother disowned me.

She said, "You leave this house, don't you ever come back." I knew that that was going to happen. But the whole year that I was gone I still gave her one hundred dollars a month and with my expenses I didn't have anything but maybe ten dollars left for the rest of the month. She never barred the door or anything but I just knew when she said that to me she would not pay attention to me.

When I started dating my husband I had this steady boyfriend. It was great. He just took me everywhere. We went to concerts and the symphony and plays and everything. And he had a sports car. A brand new red Porsche. I had always felt that I was an ugly duckling all through grammar school. I changed somewhat and then I was starting to look attractive to men and that was a great big plus. When I did decide to get married I did not want to have the kind of wedding that my sisters had. They would buy beautiful dresses and rent a hall and have a band. Why are they doing that? I don't want that. I made my dress and we had our reception at my mother's house. So we just had family--there were maybe seventy. My mother said, "You're not going to have your wedding here!" But I said, "I have helped buy this house, and I want my reception here." I just went ahead with my plans. And what could she do? She gave me a hard time because I was not inviting all her friends. ("But you've got to!") But I did it my way.

We took a trip to Mexico for three weeks. It was in May that we married. I quit my job right away, and didn't work at all. There were some feelings there, about us, a mixed marriage. My supervisor had talked to me. What is this, you and Henry. I think there was also some regulation about people not working within the same department being married.

I got pregnant immediately that first week. In September I did enroll in the community college. And I felt out of place, really out of place, because most of the students there were just out of high school, and here I was, twenty-two, and pregnant. My due date was not until February. I enrolled knowing that the semester would end at the end of January. Well, that gives me time, I can finish up. The baby will come late. I didn't know it was going to be twins.

I just wasn't that confident about how I would do in the classroom, especially with these young kids. I was afraid of coming out looking dumb. I was afraid of not making it, because college was a real mystery at the time. I didn't know what it was going to be like. I enrolled in the Spanish class and the pottery class and American Institutions class. In my American Institutions class I did the midterm and I felt so great because my instructor picked up my midterm and he read it to the class. He said, "This is what I'm after." I remember feeling, wow, I didn't know that I could do that.

The first semester I did really well, getting A in Spanish, getting a C in pottery. What happened was, during Christmas vacation the kids were born, close to two months early. This was a complete surprise, things started happening. They put me into the emergency room. This was in the middle of the night and the doctor just said very calmly, "It looks like twins." And I said, "You're kidding," and he said, "No, hasn't anyone told you?" So they were born that night and school started the week after and I went back to school. I think I missed one day. The kids were in the hospital, they were so little, for three weeks. That was such a great period in my life, you know. I was going to school and during vacation I had the kids. I went back to school and finished up and they did come home just before finals. I took my finals, I got an A in Spanish but I got a B in American Institutions. I didn't study for that test at all. The kids had come home the night before. My husband took some time off work. It was a great big thing throughout both families. And that's when I decided I don't want my mother to take care of my babies, I want to take care of my own babies. Well, I'm not going to go back to school till the kids are in school. And we knew that we wanted more kids so that was the plan. Once we finished our family I would go to school when they started school. I really enjoyed staying home those years except for the last couple of years with my youngest. I was anxious to do something else by then. I had done all of this stuff and now I wanted to do something for myself.

I was always planning to go to the community college. My ex-husband is a graduate of the university. Just being able to say, "I went to the university" I think had a lot to do with my husband encouraging me to go. And I wanted no part of it. I was afraid of it. I thought that if I'm going to start I'm going to go to the community college. And of course I already had that one semester right after I was married. I thought, they'll give me a background, and it doesn't cost any money and also the university was huge and I was really afraid of going there. I was afraid of going to the community college also, but there was snobbishness connected with going to the university. I was thirty-four when I started so it was like fifteen years. I knew that I would do it and I knew that it would be a while. The plan was always there but what to study was not always there. I changed from social work to being a teacher and then finally, nine years ago--we have a really good woman pediatrician, and I remember thinking one day after taking the kids for an exam , "If I had it to do over, I would become a pediatrician." And that started me thinking in the medical field. Midwives were beginning to get into the news and there was a controversy about whether they should or could practice. That really appealed to me, the practice of midwifery, because I had good experiences with my births and I thought, "It's medicine and it's working with people and for the most part it's a happy episode in people's lives." I felt really good when I finally decided on that. I just kind of knew by the time that I was ready to go to school that it would be legal. I had to become a nurse first and then go on to the training, and the community college did have a nursing program.

After waiting all these years I was really afraid even to get down there to register. Kept putting it off and finally it was late August when I went there and started the process. I couldn't even remember what it was all about, so the whole process was new and really threatening. Even though I had had a good experience that one semester, everything came back, the fear and apprehension. And then my age--I was so much older this time, and I had a whole bunch of kids. And do women my age really go back to school? I really didn't know any at the time. There were some people that were past high school age but I just remember feeling that I was the oldest. No, there was another woman in her sixties but most of them were in their twenties. I signed up for Spanish class again. I really wanted to use it in the field I was in and I signed up for a basic math review. I had gotten A's in algebra in high school and I thought I could go straight into an algebra class. I went to the class, they gave us a pretest--fifteen questions--I couldn't remember anything. I felt so terrible, so deflated. So I registered for beginning math, the whole time feeling that everyone knows I'm taking this class and everyone knows I'm dumb and stupid, and it was a real let-down. I had math and Spanish and I took a speedreading class. I thought, well, I'm going to take it easy. I didn't even know what the prerequisites were for the nursing. Later in that semester I did go and see the counselor.

I was just really afraid of overdoing it. The math class that I had, the instructor was terrific. I mean, he was just so sensitive to me and how I was feeling. He could teach anyone math. I wasn't having trouble at all but I could see him with other people, how patient he was, and how many different ways he would explain the concepts and theories. We began a friendship talking not only about math but everything else. I would see him through the years, we've always talked. And when I started working at the Women's Center it was right next to the math class. He really supported us, he would send women to us.

At first I wasn't going to mention my age to anyone. I remember talking to the math instructor after the final. He knew that I had a family and he was impressed with the fact that in that book I did every single problem. I was determined to know that stuff. He knew of another woman that was doing the same thing and he said to me, "An older woman like you." I said, "That wasn't nice," and he laughed. I was crushed. But he didn't mean it as a put-down at all. He was just impressed that we were that intent on doing well. He asked me if I would tutor the next semester but I didn't, I had scary feelings about doing that.

The next semester, after I had seen the counselor, then I got into classes with other women who were also going to be nurses. In talking to other people, the advice that we were getting, it was not consistent. There was only one nursing counselor and something was not right. I could tell from talking to a whole lot of other people. I took a class that really wasn't necessary. There was an English 21 A and B. 1A and B are transferable to a four-year college and he recommended that I take 21A, knowing that I was going into the nursing field, but that kept me from using that class [for transfers]. He never even suggested to me that I might try going on to a four-year college. He didn't tell me what my options were. I was going right ahead to the community college two-year nursing program which would only give me a license and no degree. There were just so many discrepancies. I really started to feel angry that this was going on. We were being given information that was causing us to take extra classes that we really didn't need. I didn't like what was happening, but then I looked at it like well, okay, this class is really good for me anyway.

They gave me a good English teacher and he was really encouraging and he would go out of his way to help students in whatever way he could. But he would also get very exasperated because a lot of the students in there were young kids, just weren't interested. They didn't participate in discussions, they didn't have anything prepared. The first day he wanted to see where we were so he had us write. I forget what the subject was. I really felt that English was always a problem for me, I was always afraid of writing, feeling really inadequate. When I got the paper back I felt great because he had really nice things to say. It just kept me going. I remember my husband picking me up that day. I remember running to the car, showing him how good, how proud I felt with this paper. I continued in that class and really did well. I got an A and I remember the final paper was the big paper for the final exam. I wrote about myself, why I feel equal to men. It was about me and my family. It was just so neat to get that paper back because he said, "This is the best paper I've read in a long time."

The third semester I did start talking with other people and I did look into a four-year college. Most of the students were preparing themselves for the community college program but there were a few that were applying to the state colleges. I heard more and more talk about how the requirements were going to change. I knew that in the State of New York by 1985 all nurses are going to be required to have a Bachelor of Science degree. What I was hearing was, you might as well go get that Bachelor of Science in nursing because sooner or later things are going to change. I met a couple of women who were already R.N.'s who were coming back to get their additional education for their Bachelor of Science degree and it was taking them a long time doing it that way. Hearing these things I started to feel like I wanted to do something about what was going on with the counselors . Another woman was really upset with the information she had gotten. We said, "We can't just let this happen." We were also in a sociology class together and our sociology teacher was a really strong feminist woman. That was the third semester and I hadn't had a woman before that. I was talking to one woman who also had four kids and she had also come back because she was going to be a journalist. We were talking about all this business with the counselors. I remember students coming into the classroom asking for people to get involved in student government. They always had positions open for student senators so I went in and applied. Later that semester there was another opening and I got the position. I wrote something up and presented to the senate what was going on with the counselors and everyone agreed,"Yeah, we've heard of problems like that." So I got three, four good people that were interested in working on that committee and I mean we were persistent, and I wrote things up. We went through channels and it didn't take us long.

The counselors have a regular meeting. Our first step was to get into that meeting and present our problem. We wrote up this letter and it was really kind of strong. The counselors were all defensive: well, who is doing this? What do you mean? We wouldn't mention names. We said to them, "We have specific instances, we have specific names and we'll talk to the head of the counseling department ." There were four of us women, a woman I had met in my pre-nursing classes who was twenty-seven at the time and had a child; another single parent who was about the same age and another woman in her twenties also. First we got a letter back from counselors saying, "You're all wrong." It was a long, long letter. putting us down. We didn't let that stop us. We just went ahead with our plan without getting emotionally involved and it worked. We went with the counselor to the head of the counseling department. We said, we want to meet with you and we will give you the specific instances. Most of the incidents were to do with science classes and nursing. But we said, "It's not just that department. There are problems in the advice students are getting that are going on to four-year colleges and we want something done about it." We really got to know the people in administration. We got to know everyone. We also had it written up in the school paper. I got to know the president, the dean of students, the assistant dean, all the counselors. We were not seen as radicals or anything. I mean they worked with us because they saw that we were going to be persistent, and finally we were together. They assigned more people to work on this articulation to four-year colleges. They re-arranged things so that the counselor could work full-time. So we did get results and it didn't take too long. It was a matter of maybe three months. After that I couldn't spend any more time on it because I needed to get a job.

I was thinking of working off-campus but then one of the women that I met in student government said to me, "There's an opening coming up in the Women's Center. Why don't you go?" I thought, I don't want to be a part of that feminist thing. Because I would feel sometimes like an oddball in talking to other women because I'm staying home with my children. I could drop my son off at school and pick him up on my way home from class so that I didn't get any kind of child care. I never really did that with the three older children either. I just didn't like the idea, them so young, of being under someone else's supervision. I remember going to the Women's Center when I first got there, thinking they would have speakers and things, and it was kind of political, turning a lot of people off. I hadn't met the director but when I went to her I said, "I have two things to talk to you about. The first thing is I know you're familiar with what we've been trying to do and I really want to know what you think about it. The second thing is that you have an opening in the Women's Center and I'm looking for a job." And because of my experience, I guess, in getting involved it worked out fine.

It was a fantastic experience. The things that they were doing and the things that I was allowed to do, use my ideas and go ahead on them. They were going to invite speakers from different nontraditional careers and let other women see what else was open to them. And not knowing what I was getting into, not knowing if I could do it but feeling I've got to prove myself, I started to take that on. And I did everything. Not only did I arrange for these different women from different careers to come and talk but I also thought we should have a representative from the faculty that teaches in that field so that we could get everything, not only what's going on in the field but what do we have to do to get into that field. It worked and it was a good series. We had a woman mechanic who was a graduate and one who was working for the city. Another one was working in the research department at an oil company. It was really a hard semester for me. That semester I also dropped a class. There were things happening at home too. My younger son had to switch schools. The class that I had to drop was microbiology. Oh, that was a difficult class.

When I dropped that micro class I really felt bad because that was one of the pre-requisites for the state college. With the degree you can always work in a hospital, it gives you a lot more mobility. If you have that Bachelor of Science degree you can be a supervisor, you can work in a clinic. A license, R.N. license, is what you get at the community college.

One thing that we did for women was, we offered help on one of the registration days at the Women's Center. We'll help you fill out your schedules, we'll go over to the registrar's office with you. We had abut ten women come. They were so thankful. We took them on a tour of the school, showed them where their classrooms were. I remember one woman that I was helping--she kept squinting and I was telling her how to fill the form out. I said, "Would you like me to fill it out?" And then I got the idea and I found out later that it was true: she didn't know how to read. So I signed her up for the remedial reading class, a special Title III program. She didn't tell me that her daughter brought her there. This woman had decided to come back to school and so she registered that day. I remember seeing her a couple times after that, getting A's in everything. And she was, you know, fifty-six years old.

I had to take two chemistry classes: one for the community college and the other I needed to get into the state college. I kept putting them off. Finally the fourth semester I signed up for a chemistry class and it was awful. I'm in a physics class right now. Oh, I'm going to need help on this. It's chemistry and things like that I just really am afraid of. That's a whole lot of the problem, I have such a fear. I got through the chemistry classes somehow. I got an A--he counted a lot towards the lab work. But then I had to take organic chemistry and that was a mystery to me. It got beyond me. So much memorizing to do. I got a C in the class but that was my first C. It didn't devastate me. I was afraid it would. Now I was in the pre-nursing classes so there were more women closer to my age and we were all going through a lot of the same things. I remember that instructor being impressed with the number of women with families coming back. He said, "I don't know how you all do it." I had to go back and do the micro. I got a C, but I saved that till the last semester I was there. I went to one of the information meetings at the state college and they'll tell you everything. The woman there said, "If you have trouble with a certain kind of a class, just save it till the end because we're not going to count that last semester into your GPA to get you into school. It's too late for us to do it." I got a C and I got into the program. And let me tell you--I guess I want to brag a little bit--but when I graduated I got four scholarships. Every one that I applied to I got.

I think my experience at the college is not quite the same as most people. I did get involved and ended up working at the Women's Center and I was able to do so many things: setting up programs and running programs, being a counselor to other women. No one said, "You're not experienced enough." Everyone said, "Do what you can and we'll help you do it." There were so many teachers that were encouraging right at the beginning. One teacher happened to be Black. Most of them were white. The Spanish teacher was Puerto Rican. No one said, "What are you doing here? You're a little old, aren't you?" I never got that from any of the teachers. Well, there was one teacher that was discouraging but it wasn't to me as a person or to my age group. It was just that he was discouraging to everyone. But there were enough of them that made it a really good experience and encouraged me to go ahead. When I first came, I thought that I would do the nurses' training and that would be it. It was within the next couple of years that I decided to go on. And why not, I kept saying to myself. At first the idea—oh, no, that's too much for me. Still, just the extra requirements to the state college really kind of frightened me. There were periods--can I ever do it? But never strong enough to stop me.

What have you gotten yourself into? Can you really do this?

I want to do something meaningful with my life. I see too many people unhappy in what they are doing. I don't want to attach my life to another person. I am separated now. I do look forward to another relationship, but it's not going to be my whole life. I'm going to have a career and I intend to work the rest of my life. When I chose this career there were so many things that were so good about it. First of all, just being a nurse meant I can work anywhere in the world. I will be needed, there will always be a need for nurses. I don't have to retire at a certain age, because I don't plan to. I can be an administrator, with a degree, in hospitals or in clinics. I want to be in a position to make decisions. Most people in power in any kind of field are white and I really want to make a difference with that too. There were never any real role models for me. I mean I want to be a role model and that's why I've always kept my maiden name. My maiden name was Melendez--Marta Melendez Wilson and that is very important, and my children carry that name too. They use Melendez Wilson. It's not hyphenated. With any kind of forms they put Melendez and it's important to them. I have four children. Three of them look like their father. He's English and they're fair skinned with blond hair. My fourth one looks more like me, he's dark skinned with dark curly hair, he looks Mexican. I have always tried to give my children a feeling of who they were and they're not white, I mean, they are but they're also very much Mexican and they feel it. They've got a good strong feeling about that and they have a real strong identity with my family.

The experiences I had with gynecologists were I think the same as any other woman. I didn't question it. I said that's the way it is. You go in, you have your exam, five minutes later you're done. What do you know? I heard about the Women's Health Collective just last September and it just sounded too wonderful to be true . They would give you this training and all they ask is that you give them back, after you were trained, volunteer work. I came home thinking that's too much. I can't do it--school and working at the Women's Center and the Collective. But the response I got from my husband was, "Sounds like you should do it." I went ahead but there were problems. I would get dinner on the table and wouldn't really get a chance to eat. Pretty soon every Monday and Wednesday there was an argument before I left. But I was determined to do it, it was too important.

When I started to train I thought, well, I was overdue for a gynecological exam. I thought, I'm going to go here. You pay whatever you can afford. So I had my exam and pap smear done and it was so different--it was such a nice experience. They took at least an hour explaining things to me, giving me time to ask questions and that's the whole idea behind it. Give these women the knowledge that they need and the power that they need. Ask questions, it's your life. I finished the training but the commitment became too much.

It was all very eye-opening to me. Here I was in the Women's Center and in the Collective, and just so many women that held so many strong feelings and I had a lot of these feelings too but they weren't really clear I guess, so all of this training coming from women I just really needed. It was always there, even from the beginning. I remember I had some feelings, but I was also getting different things from people around me. I mean women had their place, the wife and the mother. It was 1964 when I got married and I think that was about the beginning of the feminist movement. But I stayed away from it mainly because I wanted to be home. I kept reading that that was not the thing to do. Maybe I wasn't getting the whole picture but I knew what I wanted to do and I didn't want to be a part of that--although I had feelings. I remember purposely not reading any of the feminist books. I didn't want to be a wild-eyed feminist. I mean, I could go overboard and here I was the mother of four little ones. I was the only Mexican in the group at the Collective. There were two Asians and me; I don't think there were any Blacks in that group. I was already in the Women's Center and I was able to speak out there when issues came up. Oh, I remember being put down when I talked about my husband.

I found out that I do enjoy working in a field that really deals with women. I plan to work at a county hospital that serves mainly nonwhite people. Someone asked me, "How do you know that you're going to do that? And how do you know that there will be a position there?" I said, "There will be by the time I get done." That's how things keep working out for me. When the time comes I will have what I want. I mean, that's how my job at the Women's Center worked out. Going to school and getting into a program. That's how it's going to work out for me to get into the midwifery program. They only take ten at a time for the training. Once I get my license then I will have to go and apply to the medical school--they have the midwifery training. All I actually need is an RN and I'm going to get everything before I apply there. I did talk to a midwife that was one of our speakers at the Women's Center. I talked to her about it and she said, "It's difficult to get in but if you're a minority you're going to have an easier time of it because they don't have many women coming into the training program that are minorities."

So everything is going to work out for me. Yeah, it really is. I've been planning it and it's going to work out.

Profile

SYLVIA COBB

(Sylvia Cobb, forty-eight, is a student in a northeastern community college in a two-year drafting program. She was interviewed twice at the college and once at her home in the spring of 1982.)

I decided a year or two before I came here that it was necessary for me to get retrained in order to go to work. I didn't know at that point that my marriage was going to fail, although I think that the signs were in the wind, and, married or not, once my children were out of the house, I wouldn't want to be just hanging around. And I really was aware that this time around I had the chance to make deliberate choices. I don't think I had ever done that. When I went through college I followed the crowd . Liberal arts was sort of the thing to do. When I got out of college I took whatever job I could find. Everything came one after another, rather easily. I hadn't made any particular choices. So I sat down and I tried to discover something that would combine all the things that I liked best. So here I am.

I'm an only child. I'm a depression baby. I've got the smallest age cohort in the country, nobody is my age. All my friends are either older than I am or younger than I am. My grandfather died when I was three and we lived off and on with my grandmother until she died which was 1947. She was very much an influence on my life. My grandmother was very competent, bright, and really strong willed. My grandfather had been a professor at a technical college. There was no tradition of sexism. There was certainly an assumption that, whatever was at hand, the purpose was to get the task done and it really didn't matter whether it was a woman or a child or a man. I'm not a very good libber because half the time I don't see discriminatory situations. A great-great-aunt of mine had introduced manual training to the schools. A great-aunt a generation younger had spent years in Paris, came back, ran a school. They all kept on doing the job. My mother is not an awfully competent person, but she was asked to run the Red Cross Motor Corps during World War II and she proceeded to go out and learn auto mechanics, how to take a car apart and put it together again and she just got it done, that's all. My father was in the navy, so the household was my grandmother, my mother and myself. I don't think that with my father at home my mother ever would have gone out for a long drive in the dark in the middle of the night but once somebody said, "Do it," she said, "Okay." Certainly never, "Who, me?" My grandmother would pick up a egg beater or a screwdriver, depending on what needed to be done. My daughter is now at a technical college and I don't think that one has included women for very long.

I'm told that my grandfather used to read to me for an hour every evening when I was about six months old. He said the sound of a human voice and looking at the page turning, all of this is a good experience. They always attributed my being something of a bookworm to that. I think that Daddy suffered from a competitive situation. He hadn't been to college and most of my mother's friends had. I don't think he ever had a job that he thought was as good as the jobs my mother's friends had. He and mother have always just sort of run the house together and shared things. Neither of them works. They have enough income from my grandparents to live on and Daddy gets disability from the navy. She's had part-time work from time to time but it's been things like a bookkeeper for a friend who ran a dress store.

Until pretty late in my childhood I was very much of a loner. I read an awful lot and drew, arts and crafts and stuff like that. One best friend. We met each other when we were in nursery school. Sort of a surrogate sister--she ultimately lived with my family. My mother's dearest oldest friend was my fourth grade teacher in school. And she is, I would say, a surrogate aunt to me.

My family were Unitarian for some generations back but there is a heavy dose of Calvinism. Dinner table conversations were likely to be a review of the day and what had been done wrong and if you spent more time studying and less reading a book you would get better grades and things like that. There was a certain sternness in the house. My grandmother was very affectionate, but she died when I was thirteen. And I spent a lot of my childhood feeling like a stranger, particularly after my grandmother died or times when we weren't living with her. Like a stranger in a strange land. Sometimes terribly upset because I had been misunderstood or couldn't make people understand. I'm sure that's the reason I turned to books. Some of my favorites, oh, the Princess and Curdie and Frances Hodgson Burnett. But I literally read everything. Used to go all through those trash series books. And when I had finished all of my Nancy Drews I read every Hardy Boy book that has been published, and every Tarzan book.

I went to public kindergarten and up through the sixth grade, where I did very very badly. That school ended at the sixth grade and you had your choice of going onto a prep school which prepared you for "Classical High School." My grandmother of course considered that someone of my stature and capacity would go to the prep school and of course the school announced that I was not going to. Because they chose where you were going to go, on their judgment of aptitude. I don't think I had ever gotten above a C in anything except the year that I had mother's friend as a teacher when I had gotten an A in everything because I was too embarrassed not to. I lived out the window most of the time in school. The teacher would be doing geography, you know, in class and she would call on me and I would be reading the last chapter in the book. Anyway, Nanny went over and spoke to the school and they said, "Why on earth would we send her to the prep school? Obviously she is going to go to trade school -- she could not possibly make it through." Well, my grandmother left the principal's office at the school and drove directly to the nearest private school and marched in, you know, the full bosom erected, chin up in the air, and said, "You must take my granddaughter into this school. This is an emergency!" They gave me a battery of admission tests. And my grandmother said, "Well, that will make you work and it's about time." So that was the seventh grade and I went to private school from then on through high school.

The first year that I was at the private school, I had to catch up. I had to work twice as hard and my grades came right up. There was no school on Friday afternoons and we all used to walk downtown to movies and to lunch and then get the bus home. I did very well in English and I did very poorly in algebra but very well in geometry. History I hated, Latin I hated. I think I made some sort of history by taking two sciences in my senior year which was calculated on my part to get me out of gym. I can hardly say that I made good friends there because they were the people that I had always known. I was really very late in becoming a social character. I didn't date until my senior year. And I dated very little my first two years in college. I was not a popular person. My school had college catalogues and advice and comments on what the schools were like and the faculty would say, "Do you remember so and so, she's at Wellesley." To get into the liberal arts, ivy league schools was just kind of expected. There wasn't a great deal of knowledge about anything else. I graduated with twenty-three people. Four of us went to Smith and we all lived within three blocks of each other. And three were Unitarians.

My sophomore year at Smith they almost doubled the tuition and I was there on money that had been left to me by my grandmother. It wasn't going to be enough when they raised the tuition and I hadn't been very happy there. I again felt like a stranger in that monolithic quality of the Smith campus. Lots of money every place, everyone so much alike, it irritated me. I used to speak to strangers off-campus in order to speak to children or old people. On campus I think I was the oddball . I had discovered that in high school. I don't mean to say that I was deliberately odd but I was discovering the freedom to have my own taste and do things my own way. My mother was just flat out by things like that. Anything independent was uncredentialled. Well, I was discovering my last years in high school that it didn't have to be that way, that my own nature was to be experimental . And when I got to Smith I was right back in a situation where there was absolutely no variety in the group. You know, everybody's burmuda shorts were black watch. Loafers, penny loafers. It was absolutely uniform. Oh, horrors.Bicycle-riding and beer and blind dates and sitting around knitting socks. I don't think of it as an interesting period in my life.

So I came back and lived with my family and that is what saved the financial situation. But it's hard after a couple of years of independence to come home again. I came back to the university in my hometown, lived at home and was a day student. The university is coed and you knew people from the whole school. You knew people in other classes which you don't at Smith. I mean I knew graduate students when I was at the university. The dining hall was rotten and there were hamburger places nearby and the faculty would go there just like the students. So you would sit and have a hamburger with the teacher at lunch. The chairman of the sociology department used to have an open house with any sociology students or any of their friends on Sunday afternoons and he always made crabmeat au gratin on toast and beer. There was a coffee pot in the biology lab and the biology teacher was the sociology teacher's friend, so sociology students in between classes would be up in the biology lab having coffee. It's my kind of school. There were people on scholarship and people with lots of money and people who worked and going part-time and people who had apartments of their own and people who lived in dorms and people who lived with their families, people whose parents didn't speak English. And I loved every single minute.

I dated a friend of my husband before I dated him. We were all part of a group together. I can remember months of sort of accelerating interests and longer and longer conversations. I continued to major in sociology and minored in English. When I got out of the university my mother had me persuaded (mother went to Katherine Gibbs and worked as a secretary type before she was married) that a woman could not enter the world without secretarial skills. So I spent a summer after I graduated at some probably fraudulent outfit, a secretarial school. I cheated in typing classes so if they hadn't been fraudulent to begin with I certainly would have done myself out of learning anything. Oh, I absolutely couldn't stand it, I mean my performance level went right back down to elementary school.

Finally sometime around the end of the summer I said, "I've had it, I'm going to New York." My dear friend from kindergarten had already gone to New York and was working for an airline and she had an apartment with three other girls. My husband-to-be lived in New York . So I felt, what else could you need? I had saved seventy-five dollars and I said, "Next Tuesday I'm going to New York." I transferred myself to the New York branch of the secretarial school. They had a guarantee that you could learn and so I went in and I said, "I haven't learned yet." And they were compelled to give me a chair and put me down at a typewriter and keep trying to teach me. Went out and looked for a job (I thought that I could learn typing at night) and I got a job at an auto company, counting items on invoices. I stuck with it for four to five months. At the end of the day everything had to balance with everything else. Absolutely never got it right.

My aunt knew somebody who worked for Time, Inc. She said, "Let's go and see so and so and see what she says." And so and so said, "How would you like to work for Time?" I started out as a file clerk and telephone answerer for Fortune Magazine and I was there for five years and I wound up as chief indexer of Life Magazine and publisher of the printed index.

I was married while I was working at Time. Part of that time my husband had a sociology department assistantship at NYU. I was pregnant and my husband finished his course work and he got a job in the District of Columbia. I probably could have transferred to the branch office down there. But my daughter was very sickly. She had malfunctioning innards and taking care of her took an enormous amount of time. You couldn't have asked anybody else to do it. Until she was over three months old, she was fed two hours out of every four around the clock.

In Washington I made a lot of really good friends. Those were civil rights days. I remember my cousin brought eight of his friends for the march and the Martin Luther King talk; we were right up there in front. I was standing there and looking up and the tears were just pouring down my face and I look at my cousin and he's got tears streaming down his face. [My son] Bobby was a baby because I remember I left Bobby with a neighbor. Bobby stood up in a little red wagon and fell backwards onto the sidewalk, and he had a four-inch skull fracture, whiplash, and a severe concussion. It was a doozy, he was unconscious for eight hours.

We left Washington, I think, in 1968. By that time my husband had passed his comprehensives. His Ph.D. took a long time as I think it does any family man with a job . He then got a job at a state university. He was there for two years, and a grant that he expected didn't come through and he lost his job because there wasn't a job for him to have.

What was I doing? I had been taking art courses at the university for my own pleasure. I had to quit. The family finances were absolutely a disaster. I got a part-time job in a needlework shop. My daughter was then thirteen and trying to go to school. My husband was complaining about the meals and saying, "Where are my socks?" Things were pretty tough. By spring I discovered that my job was costing me money, between the gas and the driving and so forth. The crisis time was when

I was discovering that I had to get myself back in business and I wasn't going to have mothering and housewifing as a life-long career. I went through a period of feeling really frightened, and finally coming to the conclusion that I was frightened because I was incompetent. It was getting to the point where money was the thing that would save the family. I wasn't competent to live on my own. I couldn't help out at home and I couldn't support myself. I discovered that it was just a real practical problem and not some, you know, inherent character flaw. Now I realized at the same time that I had a once-in-a-lifetime chance to figure out what I wanted to do. I think most of my life I had kind of fallen into things and this time I didn't have to. I sat down and I figured out what are the things that I like best and can I put them together into something.

I like visual things and I draw and my first requirement was that it was something that would be harmless to my drawing. I didn't want to go into commercial art where I would be compromising my drawing and my art skills all the time. I couldn't go into teaching art because to me it would be very destructive and would have me so sick of dealing with other peoples' struggles that I would never have done anything of my own. Drafting had all the advantages of keeping up the hand and eye coordination and the visualization skills without having an emotional content at all, so that it doesn't interfere or spoil anything else you might want to do. I like making marks on paper. I like seeing made real what's in my head and I like logic and systems. Technology has been always easy and pleasant for me. I was to the ears with the liberal arts mind. My children were drafting in school and I knew that I had been enormously jealous. Everything kind of came together in a hurry. Then I set about (very orderly person) investigating the field. I went and talked to the state employment office, and various people I called and asked for their placement records and I found some people in industry and talked to them. "Is drafting a good field and will I be able to make a living?" I was assured that it was a fine skill to have and I could always find a job. 1979 is when I was going through this whole process of deciding. I began here at the community college in 1980.

This is a sort of prefabricated program. You can't take odds or ends of courses or come in at the middle of the year. It's set up with a formal structure so it's best to start in the fall. As it turns out I wasn't a minute too soon because my personal life at home was disintegrating very fast, maybe even hastened by the fact that I was changing my own attitudes and knew possibly that I could get out. Anyway it's good that I didn't wait any longer. My son will be graduating from high school at the same time that I graduate from here, which means that I have freedom to look for a job where I need to. I think he's enjoyed the experience of us being students together. Somebody said to me, "You'll be one of those families with their picture in the newspaper: Mother Graduates with Son."

I didn't have any choices [of schools.] At least I believed that I didn't. The only other thing that I found out about was in a town which is too far away. The first day[at the community college] wasn't shocking or uncomfortable. I have been in academia all my life so there was no great cultural shock. I was certainly aware of the fact that I was older than everybody and maybe wasn't as assertive about making friendships and stuff like that as I would have been had they been people my own age. The young students might be surprised to hear but as far as I'm concerned the administrative ambiance here is the best of any school I've ever seen. I can remember once at the university sitting on the back staircase crying because I couldn't get my schedule straightened out and couldn't find people to sign course cards. Here it works very smoothly, partly because there aren't a lot of options and electives. Registration process is easy. And the bill paying and tuition, it seems to me that I never had to have anything signed,so there just isn't any hassle. The campus is small so there is no problem finding your way around. Before I decided to come here at all I had had a long telephone conversation with the department chairman. He was very reassuring. There wasn't a lot of advice that he could give me because the program is the program, I did or I didn't join it. There was no "let's do this, that, or the other thing" with the program.

I think I was in a somewhat favored position as an older student because, in the first place, people remember your name right away and you stand out so people know who you are. Although there are plenty of people who have had high school drafting, the program begins as if you have had none. The biggest emphasis the first semester is on simple drawing, mechanical drawing skills. The only applied course we had that semester was in architectural drawing. The courses are like studio courses with instruction added. They are inclined to be all studio at the beginning with teacher walking around and helping people or interrupting the two- or three-hour studio course with a fifteen-minute lecture. Or some teachers would begin with half an hour of lecture to get us started. I wasn't taking the same math course as everybody else. This was one of the few pieces of advice I had. I said that I was worried about math. I had not been terribly good at it as a student originally and it had been thirty years. The department chairman said, "Oh, well, if it's been thirty years since you've had math then you want to take the advanced course," and I said, "What? I've forgotten everything," and he said, "Never mind what you've forgotten, what you remember is more than three people who have recently been given math have ever been offered. The math courses were so much better thirty years ago." So the second semester I got plunked into this advanced beefed-up thing that went from calculus--it made me cry. It was called technical math with calculus. It had been a long time since I had done anything but add up the grocery bill and calculate curtain yardage. Anyway, it began with algebra. I thought I was terribly slow and clumsy at it but I simply couldn't believe the ineptitude of the class. The last two-thirds of the course was calculus. At that point I really capsized, that was beyond me. So I was obedient--something that I don't usually do in school--but I just memorized and did what I was told and followed the formulas. I got an A. But I got the feeling that there must be something lovely there and I never saw it, I never really understood the meaning of it.

The teacher first semester was teaching college math for the first time. She's a good mathematician with a master's degree in math and she was a very enlightening experience to me because when she came into class and did problems on the board she made mistakes. It cured me of math anxieties. She'd make a mistake and she would say, "Hey I don't think that's the way, that answer doesn't look right." And then she'd giggle and she'd very calmly go back and investigate her work. The second semester was a man, an engineer. He had retired from the army or the navy. He had a certain schedule that he wanted to keep to and a certain lecture that he gave every day and I think he disliked it when somebody interrupted him and said, "Can you explain?" And he'd say, "Just do it the way I told you."

I had room for electives. I am taking one now and I took one first semester. I took this course called "Construction Materials" . It turned out to be a course in concrete. Concrete--there is absolutely nothing more boring on the face of the earth. I was the only woman who ever had or perhaps ever will take that course. To make matters worse there was a lab, which largely involved filling garbage cans full of gravel and stuff and weighing them and then mixing up this concrete. And the only so-to-speak male chauvinist that I have run into was my partner in that lab. Maybe it was the second lab when he told me that I belonged in a kitchen. He was somewhat older than the general routine of students--he was in his thirties. He wasn't English-speaking and he may have come from a culture where indeed it was truly shocking for a woman to be doing what I was doing. Frankly I found it a little bit shocking to be having to lug all this gravel around.

That teacher was a scholar and gentleman. He may be the most well-spoken, well-dressed and cordial person on campus. Steel is his love and every once in a while he would talk to us about steel and he would be very dramatic. You know, discuss the power and the might and the precision and the beauty of high steel. So I don't think he likes concrete very well either. I would say that more than half of the class time was spent on concrete and the rest was divided among all the other construction materials, steel, wood, everything else.

I must tell you that my lab partner and I finally by the end of the semester found somehow a line of intersection and we wound up the star team. He was a hereditary concrete worker and I think he must have been raised on concrete. Although the technology was new to him he knew it as an art and a skill and except for when his back was out he was a big brawny guy. And I went whirling through the formulas and the technology like an ace, I mean it's extremely simple technology, and we finally developed a mutual respect. He was doing the labor and I was working up the figures and we were swapping notes to study and when I came to a place that I didn't understand he knew from straight experience what it ought to be and we wound up the pair of us getting A's, I'm sure because of our team work.

We took a field trip to a cement company on the river there by the bridge, watched them mix concrete and listened to them talk and looked at their trucks and admired the engines. We went down and watched the steel on the new Hilton being put up. When you get to a construction site you break up into groups and look at various things. The teacher would wander around and start conversations and point things out. Said, "Did you notice and I just talked to the foreman and you know they had to get a special crane to raise that boom."

The next semester I had two electrical courses, electrical theory and electrical drawing, and a mechanical drawing course. And again math. Last fall I had a materials course which was terribly difficult--understanding the structure of steel itself. I mean molecularly and being able to distinguish the differences between one kind of steel and another. Or one kind of plastic and another. Labs and testing, it's very very technical. Given a lot of physics and chemistry it would have been easier. I had never had any chemistry . And of course it went very rapidly. It was taught by a man who was academically very rigorous--a lot of the faculty here is not. The teaching here is not sophisticated and you know the academic requirements are not anywhere as near as ambitious as they could be. They were in the materials course, it's a killer. I had tool design which I just loved. That's designing holding devices and fixtures for machining things. The first several weeks we had to be taught things like tolerance and fit. There are systematic standards for how tightly a screw fits into a hole, for example. It was really a question of being given a problem and working on it in class and the teacher would walk around and you'd stop him as he passed by and ask questions if you needed help or you'd go up and ask him. If six people asked him the same question he'd interrupt the class and say, "Here's the way you go about it."

About six out of thirty or forty are women in every class, except for concrete. I knew that I was going to get into technology, but I didn't know how much and I didn't know how much I was going to enjoy it. In fact, I'm now impatient with things that are simply drawing. The other course I had last semester was dimensional metrology. This is mechanical and not artistic drawing. If you want to draw it so that someone else can make one, you've got to measure it. By the time you get into machinery parts they have to be precisely done so you measure with vernier calipers and micrometers and a lot of fancy sophisticated equipment. It was a whole course in how to use those things.

I have a course in industrial design which is piping and steel and stuff like that. Although I find steel construction very dramatic, drawing it is boring. I've got a course in air and fluid which is really hydraulic design, cylinders and valves which I have trouble understanding. And I have a course in time and motion study which all seems terribly obvious to me and I can't imagine why this is being inflicted on me.

I'm taking an art course as an elective. Getting my money's worth out of the community college. I didn't take one last semester. Everybody had warned me that second and third semester is the most difficult because of that materials course. I also hadn't known whether it was going to be difficult to keep house all alone with all the responsibilities of a family and whatever was being done was being done by me. I didn't even know if I was going to be in some sort of crisis about being alone. Last year was the middle of the crisis, the leaving year. School starts the end of August. I had finally broken I don't know how many years' silence, and gotten some advice. I was going to a marriage counselor all last year and it's a very grueling thing to do. Laying my soul bare and endless crises at home. A scene at two in the morning. I would get myself up at six o'clock and grab some coffee and try to present some kind of whole appearance to my son. At least I was trying to be warm and contained. And then I'd drive in to school.

It was a long drive. I took to doing something that I hadn't done since I was troubled in high school. I would recite poetry on the way in to school for an eight o'clock class. I'd go to classes and have lunch . I've got good friends here, all ages. About half of them are the age you would expect, you know, they are eighteen, nineteen. A few are closer to my age. We sit and have sometimes a longish lunch hour when we do homework as well as eat.

I've had to do studying on weekends all along. Sunday I usually plan to do housework and studying on Saturday, or vice versa. There has been a lot of work to all of it, rigorous or not. Some of it is challenging where you have to indeed study in order to understand. But an awful lot of the rest is just a lot of work. You know they want you to practice finding something in catalogues so you have got three sheets of stuff to look up in catalogues. No papers. My concrete course had some things that were sort of like papers. We had to write an imaginary proposal letter. We would suggest concrete of such and such a mix and we had to make up what company we were and what company they were. I named myself the Sorrowful Pit Gravel and Grit Company and everyone else was very sober and serious.

From a certain point of view I feel competent to do designing. I can design in the sense that I am good at putting systems together. If you asked me to design an air conditioning system I'd have to go out and find out about air conditioning, but I do know how to make things fit, adjust, you know, and angle them, twist them and get parts together. In one way or another I've been doing this all my life. I designed, made and sold doll houses, for example, for quite a while and was good at it. I mean I like to put things together so I'm competent from that point of view but for any given application I'd have to know the particular field. Only a very small company would have me doing that anyway. Bigger companies in fact teach you the field by having you do detailing work which is simple drawing off of other people's designs. That's the entry level, and I'd prefer to go to a larger company. So my expectation in an entry level job would be drawing more than designing.

The students are a various lot. We have a visual approach to life in common. You can refer to a drawing that you've all been working on and you can say, "Well you know on the top left hand corner," and they can all visualize the thing. That's comfortable. A man in industrial technology has become a friend because there aren't too many of us who are older around here. He's about thirty-nine. He is something of an eccentric but a warm pleasant person. And Jeff, he is young but I think he is one or two years older than you would expect. He was inducted into the honor society at the same time I was. He was my lab partner in the materials course and of course we had taken all of our other courses together. He calls me up quite often when we run into hitches in homework. He is likely to stop me outside and stand around and talk for twenty minutes. I like him. There is a boy who is very artistic and he and I hit it off, he is maybe twenty-five or something. Somehow just being one or two years older distinguishes some of these kids from the entering class that just graduated from high school. I like them all but I'm not exactly sure what the relationship is. It may be a question of finding an older person who is not a parent who's cordial and easy to get along with. I wouldn't burden them with any of my personal problems and I find myself very easy about being burdened with theirs. It's kind of an auntie kind of thing. It's some kind of a compromise between the intimacy that you can have with a peer and the safety that you have with somebody that is not competitive with you, that has somewhat more wisdom than you do, more experience surely.

The honor society--it's a national honor society for engineering technology. "Technology" really is a kind of way of saying it's an associate's degree, for a two-year college. It's sort of a junior version, I think, modeled after the engineering society. There is a chapter here and I belong to it. The grade requirement has to be met and your class percentile. I guess you need a recommendation on top of it. I've got a 3.9 out of 4 average and this letter that had my children absolutely rolling on the floor from the president of the college. It said, "Congratulations for achieving the president's list." The last line said that my academic performance "indicated maturity." Well, if you haven't gotten maturity now, Mom, you better give up.

Women are new in drafting. They have been, for the most part, welcomed in with open arms. The difference in attitudes towards me was more plain in the construction technology department than it is here. They had had girls in the drafting department at the community college three or four years when I got here. The only problem is the same problem that my daughter finds in engineering at the technical school, which is that very often examples which are being given in your instruction are things you are not familiar with. They say, "Draw such and such, you know what that is, it's just like the something or other on a carburetor," and the girls are all saying, "Oh my God, what is a carburetor?" We persuaded them that there was plenty of machinery that we were perfectly well familiar with. I can take a sewing machine completely apart and put it together again . And so now they start to teach us about valves on a pump and they say, "In the back of your washing machine is..." All the girls are sitting there smiling. There aren't any women faculty because I don't think women were in drafting long enough to have produced any women teachers. In every class we are getting the best marks, the membership in the honor society is half women. No, it's more than half.

There are lots of people with previous college experience, but I may be the only one with a B.A. It has really no bearing on what I'm taking now. It doesn't change my qualifications in this program , so it's a curiosity, you know, nothing more. Well, I write well, yeah. For instance, when we had to do written things I had a good time with them while everybody else sweated and shook . My concrete lab partner was very verbal but newly verbal in English. That certainly would have held him back on reports it was a lot easier for me to do. He didn't even know I had a B.A., so I think that he was attributing this to "a woman is good for something."

This is vocational training after all and the obvious meaning is that it will help me get a job. It's been a good chance to test myself. I've done well and that's very heartening. You do wonder whether you will do well returning as an adult, whether you're as mentally limber as you were when you were younger. My grades now are far better than they were when I was an undergraduate many years ago. Not only my grades but I think I get a certain amount of academic respect from other students, you know, who come to me for help. I don't think that has anything to do with my age. I do think that I am competent and I'm in the field and doing well. I think I never trusted any feedback that I got from myself and my own performance in the liberal arts situation. I never knew whether I was bullshitting or not and I've lived in an academic situation ever since I was an undergraduate and all of our friends have been in the academic world. This I do know. I'm dealing with things that the issue is, can it be made to work, and yes, I can make it work. The gratification is enormous.

I guess I am coming to the conclusion in my own life that practical matters are for work and ideas of the head for play, and that's the way I'd like it to be. I'd rather discuss novels and history for recreation, and work at making a diagram of something or see if I can fit things together or solve the problem in math. It's odd to me that I wasn't encouraged to do that as a kid. I could tell when I was working on a painting or a drawing, when I had made that work, when I had made it succeed, when I made it do what I wanted it to do. I never had that kind of control manipulating the verbal world or the world of pure idea. In art I know whether I'm bullshitting or not. I can tell with the technical things that I'm into now even better. I set myself a task and can go to bed that night thinking I have succeeded--or I haven't succeeded and will have to spend tomorrow on it too. There is a security in that that I love. Perhaps all I'm saying is that I find more control over this kind of thing in my own life . I think, too, that when my marriage was breaking up I was drowning in a sea of words just whirling around . I was in an entire culture of people who were verbally manipulative and I became very distrustful of the whole thing.

But I could can tomatoes before I got into a crisis, I could can tomatoes during the crisis, and I can can tomatoes after the crisis. I have no cause to rebel against the world that I can put my hands on. Maybe I've just kind of withdrawn into a cave of the material world that I can handle and see and understand.

I had never really confronted the question of what do I want to put my whole life into. I think I just kept putting one foot ahead of the other and didn't think, didn't really examine it. But now I've got seventeen years. I mean I don't have a lifetime. People get out of college and they're committed to forty-five years at whatever careers they choose. I'm not. So if I get sick of it in ten years I only have seven years to go.I wanted to be an occupational therapist before I went to college at all. I was ardently interested in nature and the only conservation school at the time was Cornell's forestry school, and I was torn between that and arts and crafts and I was considering medical illustration and I was talked out of them all. The family doctor who was also a neighbor was asked to discuss the medical illustrating with me and he told me that he thought that I might be good at it except that it was going to be awful gory which he knew I would hate. The Boston School of Occupational Therapy was the thing that I was most serious about. Guidance at school was, "We can't tell you anything about it." At home, arrangements were sort of swiftly and enthusiastically made to go visit Smith and "Well, I'm not exactly sure how we get to the Boston School of Occupational Therapy. Why don't you see if you can find anybody who's ever gone there?" I think of the school principal in the sixth grade who said that surely I would go to vocational school and my grandmother got so mad. And here I am.

While I was at Time, I don't think I bothered to think about my future, past the point of wondering how long I would continue working . It was fairly well understood that I wouldn't work after I had children. Towards the end, the last part of my time at Time, I started working on the feasibility of computerizing the Time, Inc., files. I was just totally caught up in it and at that point I did start at least having fantasies about a career. It would have been computer courses plus language. For all my talk about being sick of being tangled in a sea of words I like to play with them and I like to use them as systems, the same way that I like to draw pictures and make the lines straight. I did have fantasies then, and I got pregnant. My husband got the job in Washington which meant moving so that ended that. I don't know but I think that he probably would have been quite content if we had had children and I worked. It was me who didn't want to work while I had small children. I felt very strongly about it and I still do. I really don't know how people manage, I don't know how their children manage. I think it's important for a kid to have a full-time parent, I don't care who, it could be the man, that wouldn't bother me at all. I don't think it has much to do with whether somebody is baking cookies, I think that is trivial. I think if you could have a job where you could take the kid along, that probably would be terrific.

I'm not sure if there is much contact between the vocational and the liberal arts. I doubt if there is much discrimination one way or another. All of us in drafting have pretty good feelings about the whole thing. I don't think any of us feel that we are being put down. About my B.A., I've questioned whether I would want to make practical use of it any longer but certainly it's been enriching, I don't question that. The students who are friends of mine I think kind of consider it part and parcel of my being older. They probably would be shocked if I were just out of school with a fresh B.A. and I was doing this. They accept because they accept that I'm middle-aged. The faculty I think maybe had a little trouble with it. I think they were kind of confused. I think they are all comfortable with it now.

This vocational training for the most part doesn't hang a carrot in front of your nose the way the liberal arts things do. I seldom finish a course and determine to spend my vacation finding out more about it. I am not particularly interested in further investigating the theory of all of this drafting. I'd like to know more about analytical aspects of the system. For example, the world is getting into kinds of things which have not been drawn before , things which are microscopic and there are some issues about how should they be drawn. These are questions of communications and art and system, they are the formal questions of the subject. I'd like to know more about those things. As computer graphics gets more and more involved I think there are going to be storage issues. That kind of progress interests me but I don't think more school does. I'm schooled out. I think I'd do better to get the training on the job than in school, further training. I have, I think, conquered how to be a student. I've learned to learn. I think that maybe that's partly why I am getting A's. It's a matter of having finally perceived how to learn in this kind of a situation. Now I can pick up a book and be the teacher. I don't know whether it's because I have a B.A. or whether it's because I am forty-eight or because I have grown up with teachers. Yeah, I guess I feel that I am different. I kind of like it.

I did very poorly on the first test I ever took at the community college and it was my daughter who sat me down and told me instructions on test strategies I had forgotten. You know, do the easy things first, don't lose your cool so that you make the best of your time. That exchange is fun. I'm not always away in the day time and my schedule isn't a full day. I think I affected all of our lives, because I will get a far better job than I would have if I hadn't had any training. In the first place my children are not that young, you know, and secondly, they like the idea of my being in school. My son works at McDonalds as well as going to school . This way we have each got two jobs. I have the house and school and he's got McDonalds and school. This isn't a very big place, there isn't much to be done. Either of us helps the other one.

I wrote in my diary that the chief griefs in my life are not the things that they were supposed to be. My grandparents' house in Maine after my grandmother died, and the house had to be sold, was one of them. The fact that my grandmother died, I mean, losing her. Losing the art program at the university was one that left awful scars. It was almost a year before I could drive past the campus without turning my head away. I thought I would reproduce an undergraduate major in art so that I could go on to graduate school. Some of these art courses at the university were very very difficult and I would go to bed at night with my visual capacity just absolutely exhausted. I started investigating where to go to get the master's program and I realized that not only could I not afford the tuition but that I was going to have to go to work, and I just had to quit. I really wasn't aware of the scholarship aid that was available to me. I could perhaps have said to my husband, "Well, then we will sell the house." I didn't fight. I thought I saw what had to be done and did it. But my own feelings of grief about it--I kept telling myself, look, I was doing this for recreational purposes anyhow. I refused to meet people for lunch on the campus. I didn't pick up a pencil to draw for two years. I grieved more over that than I did over losing my husband. I felt really dead. Maybe I was just in practice for leaving things by the time I left him, she said bitterly. It's kind of an awful feeling because I was old enough to think there aren't going to be second chances. Looking back on it I think I should have fought. My family say now they didn't know how badly I wanted to go.

I think I realize now that there is nobody as well equipped as I am to know what it is that I want and to make the decision about whether or not I should fight for it. I don't know what the nonfighting came from. I'm sure that part of it was the feeling that I didn't have the right . That other people's needs were more important than mine. I think part of it was: I wouldn't succeed anyway, or I'd be sorry later. I really love the drafting. It never causes me any pain or anguish. I don't have to work that hard at it. I'm not sure that I want to have other people's well-being depend on something that agonizes me and wipes me out. I set aside a week to paint at Christmas and I knew that was the length of time I had and I was great with effort . But that's not the way I want to live forty hours a week, every week, and have the food in my children's mouths depend on it.

Commentary

Gloria Santos, the youngest of the five returning women students whose profiles appear here, returns to school after nine years. Because she never completed high school, the first hurdle is the GED high school equivalency tests, which she passes on the second try. At the community college the maze of enrollment and class choice confounds her, and the first semester is "miserable." She gets little counseling or information about courses to take and resorts to a random selection. Finally she receives some welcome advice: her accounting teacher urges liberal arts and science courses in preparation for the nursing program, her goal in these first studies. She was beginning to think she could depend on no one.

Santos runs a perpetual obstacle course in the first semester at the community college. Reading her words, we are dimly aware of the ghosts of other women who would not have quite that edge of determination mixed with humor which overcomes the many small irritating and demeaning details of getting into school and staying there. The ghosts left after the first "merry-go-round" of the "computer error", the first bold hint of racism in the English class, the first indication that financial aid was something you had to ask for again and again. But Santos jumps the hurdles or walks around them, observes the weaknesses of organizational procedures, and is eventually able to say she is proud of herself. She tries to work with the teacher who continues to grade her papers low, even when her tutor insists that Santos' papers have attained the same quality (equal to an A grade) as the tutor's. But when she recognizes that she "didn't have a chance," Santos changes teachers, gets help, improves her grades.

It was, finally, "up to her." When Santos recognized the situation for what it was, a situation where help came only when she went after it herself, she forced herself to "be better." She dropped two classes and kept two. She took advantage of every advertised assistance, found a course in how to study, badgered teachers for explanations, worked hard to understand the teachers whose vocabulary she didn't understand.

The first of all her family to go to college, Santos remembers that her mother "didn't believe in books" and considered education beyond high school a waste. Most of her community thought work more important than education and did not connect the two. She worked hard to convince her relatives that they, too, should return to school but she had little success.

A sadness filters through her general state of euphoria over her choice of nursing as a career, her pleasure at thinking of "taking care of somebody." The sadness is from her worries over her own children. She wants above all for them to have a better life than hers, to have things she did not have. But in order to study and go to school, she must sometimes deny them her attention, and she must have them cared for by others. "When I am doing something good, I am doing something bad to them." She wants to learn for her own sake, but for them too. If anything will destroy her carefully built plans and dreams, the small hand that grabs her papers will do it.

Somehow we feel she is winning this battle, in spite of her guilt, loss of sleep, conflict with family, struggles with the language, subtle and not-so-subtle pressures that weigh on her as a Hispanic woman in a racist society. But these all take their toll. She is one of the "high-risk" students struggling against the odds (Moore 1970). What will happen if the nursing studies do not go well? What will happen if her daughter or son has the accident she fears? How strong will she have to be to hold out against the odds? When Santos speaks her strength shines through. If sheer will power will do it, she will go "all the way up to the top." This is not a short-term goal. The future she envisions for her children and for herself is worth anything that she has to go through to get there.

Leslie Porter is one of the five percent of community college students who will transfer to a four-year school (Cohen and Brawer 1982). As uncertain as we are at first about the future for Santos, so are we at first sure of Porter's. A student who was once turned off by school, a puzzlement to her middle-class family and professor father, a woman who cared about cars and guns, she finds her niche, makes a place for herself in a "man's" field. Secure and competent as she seems, Porter is nevertheless torn by the conflicting pulls toward money and security, the order of her life (when to insert marriage and children?) and a streak of uncertainty: is this really the right thing, the right field?

Though coming to the community college for her is very different than for Santos--she has already had two years of college and four years of apprenticeship and paid work-- her sense of devotion to studies is as strong. She deplores the casual attitude of younger students. An independent, single woman, she is the consummate hard-working "older" student that the faculty talk about. She survives when others drop out as classes progress in difficulty. Having worked the "40-hour grind," she knows what she doesn't want. She has also had a glimpse of the beauty of physics--"something hits you." Her discussion of the break-off point--the place where most people leave--is signifient for woman-as-student. One feels, in listening to her, the delicate balance where, if she were a man, she would continue to step boldly out and pass that point. Yet being a woman and not "a real competitive person," she may step back, may not continue with the work that she has become so involved in, may settle for less, may retreat into a comfortable more acceptable womanly world which is always available and respectable. Indeed, her musing on the "isolation" of engineering as designing is a variation on Shelley Weiss's "math is lonely" theme (see chapter five). Porter is already considering combining "working with people"(management) with engineering as a solution to this problem.

Rather wistfully, she notes her lack of "those liberal arts." She is conscious of needing what she does not have. Here is a woman who will soon have had four years of college but no baccalaureate degree, her first two years a solid mechanics program. She has had the benefits of living away from home, but her course of study did not promote reflection or inquiry or aesthetic experience. She has had solid apprenticeship work where she extended her practical knowledge of mechanics. But she knows something is missing. Did the college counselor who recommended the community college engineering program do her a favor? It seems that the community college, in its anxiety to have the best possible transfer program to the best nearby four-year engineering school, may have forgotten the value of that stimulation that Porter knows she needs. A nod to the humanities in the form of one English course plus one psychology elective is not enough to "round out the edges." The heavy concentration on getting her through as an engineer may actually end by losing her in that work--as she herself suggests.

Sarah Deller, a professor's daughter like Porter, had finished her B.A., majoring in sociology (her father's Ph.D.). She had a liberal arts degree and was unclear about what she wanted to do. Her strong feelings about having her own field of expertise--something she was good at that was different from the fields of husband and father--surface throughout the interview. Because she married during college and then followed her husband in his moves to graduate school and work, and because her life was so full and seemingly satisfactory with the responsibilities of total motherhood and house care, she put away those feelings for a decade. Somehow--later--because her husband was "supportive" and her children old enough, she went back to school, trying various courses in the community college, dropping out or giving up for family emergency or lack of interest. She discovered on the first day of the horticulture class, that this was what she really wanted to do. This kind of work seemed possible, given the structure of her life as wife, mother, housekeeper. She could do this work part-time . She could earn a modest amount of money, an important addition to her feeling of self-worth. She liked the outdoors, she could set her own hours, she could continue her life without a drastic change. She felt comfortable at the community college with the people there--not like at the university. Her experience at the university told her that the road to a graduate degree was longer and harder than she was willing to combine with homemaking.

It was a good solution, but in some ways it was a "step backward." It was sometimes embarrassing to tell people that she was going to the community college. She struggled with that contradiction--her conviction that the field was right for her and yet somehow not right in relation to family expectations for graduate schooling. In the end Deller affirms her choice. The substance outweighs considerations of status for her. She recognizes her own growth, and knows that she accomplished it via the community college. It is as if the education she received through the horticulture program was just the right amount--enough to give her the "identity," the competence, she wanted. If she had gone farther it might have meant destroying the delicate balance of housewife and mother and a good part-time job.

The story does not end there, however. It is clear that Deller is looking forward to an eventual synthesis of her needs for a special field of competence, for a "good hourly wage" that attests to the value of her work, and for further education to increase her sense of professionalism. Her work at the community college put in motion an ongoing process.

Marta Melendez Wilson and Sylvia Cobb are the oldest "older students" of the group. At the time of the interviews, Melendez was thirty-eight and Cobb forty-eight. Though their lives and stories are different in almost every detail, they have in common the return to schooling at a community college after a long period--twenty and twenty-six years respectively--(Melendez had one semester of community college when she was first pregnant); concern for their adolescent children; and a recent break-up of their marriages. There is a sense of urgency in their stories close to that of Santos--an intensity that is related to the state of being alone and entirely responsible for themselves and their children. All three divorced women have a clear set of goals and plans for attaining them.

Being Mexican, says Melendez, was not "cool" but it was more acceptable then being Black. It was "different, but not outcast different." Black students in her high school were advised not to go to the graduation dance. There was some intermarriage between Mexicans and whites. The Melendez children got a feeling that they had to watch their step, had to be careful constantly not to embarrass their mother, but in spite of this they were able to maintain a strong sense of identity and pride in being Mexican. As a Mexican-American woman on her way to an education not attained by any other member of her family, Melendez has so far avoided the complex problems associated with the estrangement of educated offspring from uneducated parents (Rodriguez 1982).

In public school it was hard for Marta Melendez to make friends and to win approval of teachers. In Catholic school her life was much improved but here also were found the subtle effects of a system which placed her officially in the college prep track but did nothing about encouraging her to go to college. Though the principal did her the favor of refusing to let her get out of Latin (required in the prep group) and take

Spanish with her friends (who were not college prep) he apparently did nothing further, nor did anyone else, to see that she was advised to go on to college. She didn't think college was for her. The double-strength effect of being a Hispanic woman served to convince her that her education was completed at the end of high school ("be good girls and go on through high school") which was better than her brothers had done; and that her future, like that of her sisters, pointed toward office clerk, beautician, or teacher aide. When finally Melendez reaches the community college, she finds additional tracking in the form of transferable and nontransferable classes. Persons not going on to a four-year college are placed in particular English or math classes, and then if they change their minds they are penalized by having to take an additional course as prerequisite. Melendez is incensed at the automatic quality of the advising--assuming that students in the nursing program, for example, will not want to go on to college--and also at the fact that students are not informed of their options by counselors. With political acumen, persistence, and the help of three other older students, two of whom are mothers like herself, she works through student government and the college Women's Center and she manages to turn around the policies and procedures of the community college. She is so convinced of the rightness of her actions that even a letter from the counselors saying, "You're all wrong," puts no damper on her convictions.

Both Melendez and Cobb speak of the moments of decision, the turning points, when they have suddenly recognized their power to make a choice and to take their lives in their own hands. For women, it appears that these moments come later, that in the first adult years when men are usually consolidating their positions and advancing upon the world, women have been accustomed to take a secondary assisting role. When the moments finally come, they arrive with an explosive force--"Bopp!" says Melendez, describing such a moment for her when a fellow worker in her office said, "Why don't you go to night school with me?" "Bopp! I realized I had a choice. I can do it--why not?" But in spite of this moment of understanding and clarity, it took her sixteen more years to decide what she wanted to do and to feel freed enough from her family responsibilities in order to do it. A second "Bopp!" moment gives her strength. The discovery, during a visit to her children's pediatrician, that she would have been a pediatrician if she could start over, and that even now work with medicine and people was the way she wanted to go, was an important turning point. Now she knew where she was headed. The problems to overcome in college may later trouble her for only short periods, because her choice was clear. She "felt good" when she knew that midwifery was the right choice for her.

Melendez tells about her instructors' being impressed with the numbers of returning women students and by their industry and determination. One instructor wonders how those with families do it. Melendez herself felt different and uncomfortable at first with all these "kids just out of high school." She was afraid to register. She saw that most people were younger, though one student was in her sixties. She was given a math placement test and flunked it, felt "so terrible, so deflated." She didn't want to mention her age at first. Some one told her about another student, "an older woman like you," and she felt insulted. She was afraid of looking dumb, of not making it. It is significant that her concern with her age appeared to vanish as her confidence increased. "Older woman" was no longer a title to flinch at; she began to feel that her experience had some worth, even though she continued to find that "again, I was the oldest one."

Melendez worries about science, puts it off when possible. "Science classes frighten me the most... I have such a fear." She needs science for the nursing program, and to get into the state college she needs more. Her science phobia shows no signs of abating. It is probable that she has been limited by tracking for women in high school which allows women to take less math and science than men because, presumably, they will not need it.

Sylvia Cobb, like Sarah Deller, has a B.A. in sociology. Cobb is forty-eight and accepts her "auntie" role among the students in her community college program with more equanimity than Melendez accepts her "older woman" designation. Cobb has no difficulty in making friends of all ages. There are some advantages, she says-- "people remember you." Having something in common with the group in her program--a visual approach--is more important than age. In fact, the return to college is "no great shock" to Cobb.

In her earlier school life Cobb was "tracked" into liberal arts academic fields though her interests leaned toward forestry, occupational therapy, and medical illustration. Porter's parents could not divert their atypical daughter into acceptance of the usual liberal arts or secretarial track, but Cobb's family was more successful. It is ironic that her eighth-grade teacher was convinced that Cobb belonged in a vocational track in high school because she looked out of the window and didn't do her work. Her grandmother made sure that her wayward grandchild was accepted by a good private school where she was automatically placed on a college preparatory track. When she was ready to leave high school, Cobb's choices were ignored or subverted and she was guided into the liberal arts in a select women's college and later to the university in her home town.

Sylvia Cobb followed the crowd. It was the thing to do, she said, it was what everybody did; and she had been with "everybody" since nursery school. She just "put one foot ahead of the other--didn't think." It is not surprising that when she finally broke out of her bonds, she chose a field that represented a revolt against her parents, her college professor husband, her liberal arts education, and a return to her earlier interests. "This time around" she was able to make deliberate choices. Preparing for a divorce, she was frightened to feel herself "incompetent," needing money and job training. She carefully assessed the rightness of her decision on drafting as a career choice, examined her own abilities and motives, worked out family arrangements, and started in with confidence at a community college.

Cobb, like Melendez and Deller, grew up expecting that her major preoccupation in life would be as wife and mother. Her own mother had only occasional part-time work outside of her home and believed that skill in typing was the essential requisite for employment. Cobb's life story is an essay in contrasts and contradictions: family expectations for ivy league college education and a history of family involvement in technical education; her insistence on the total separation of her fine-art work and technical drafting; her strength and survival qualities in serious family illnesses and crises, her responsible position with Time magazine--and her view of herself as incompetent; her separation and compartmentalization of practical things (canning tomatoes and drafting) and ideas (thngs of the head, sea of words) .

Some themes weave themselves through, and tie together, the stories of returning women. A few will be discussed here: goals characteristically mixed with "helping"; mentors and role models; the "double standard"; juggling motherhood and work; notions of time in education; and the community college-- why has it been chosen by these women and what has it done for them?

Melendez is very different from Cobb in her attitude toward her work. That she is determined there is no doubt. But she has a single clear goal. Her self is not split into two parts, each warring against the other. She knows what she will do, how she will do it and why she is doing it. She is going to help women to do the thing that only they can do and to do it more happily, as she herself has done. There is a kind of dramatic logic in the choices of these two women: one who grew up with ten brothers and sisters and assorted relatives all crowded together "bumping heads and toes", is going into work which is directly connected to the expanding of that same population; the other, the only child, chooses a solitary and precise type of work as unemotional as plumbing fittings and vernier calipers. Yet both see their work as essential to their own survival and as helping their families. If, in addition, others will benefit, that is a plus. Santos hopes to go as far as she can for herself and her children, and she chooses nursing because it means "helping somebody."

Through these profiles we see community college faculty at work "helping" their students. Santos identifies some teachers as "very understanding, very open, you know you can talk to them... They listen." Stories of the other four women echo these thoughts. Teachers are available for students, they are committed to helping, they go the extra mile. Stories about uncaring or hostile teachers and staff are there but are comparatively infrequent. As faculty participants talk enthusiastically of their work with older students, so do these students mirror this enthusiasm with appreciation for the help they receive.

Role-models and mentors are a problem for women today because the necessity for them is a fairly new idea. As Cobb, Porter, and Melendez recognize, there just aren't many around in the community college; there hasn't been time to grow a sufficiently large crop in response to the most recent "women's movement." Mentors are just beginning to be recognized for their full importance. Women faculty in higher education, who have risen in their profession by exceptional persistence and at great personal cost , say that they never had a mentor (Greene 1983). To contrast this situation with the lives of men in higher education is to note a big gap in the preparation of women. Porter's role-models in the community college are all men; Cobb's classes are all taught by men; Santos has men and women professors but, as far as we know, no Spanish-speaking man or woman. Melendez and Deller both speak of women teachers, but more often of men.

The "double standard" has been a recurrent theme throughout these stories: For Cobb it is a kind of background motif in her marriage but not a condition she complains about--it was not a fact of her life in her family of origin. For Melendez it is a firmly entrenched foreground, a cultural given. Brothers leave high school and go to work, sisters finish high school and then have children. Boys can go anywhere but girls have to stay around the house. Men are encouraged to go out and find their own way but women are disowned for the same independence. Melendez both accommodates and fights the situation; she is determined not to break the ties with her family and to keep her identity as a Mexican. It is a hard struggle against her mother's firm notions but her persistence wins. It is the same problem for Santos whose mother approves of work but not of her return to school. Deller's battle is with her own internalized double standard: in her household some are more equal than others. She cannot relinquish her feelings of unique responsibility as mother and therefore has a continual sense of holding two jobs. Her graduate work, her community college program, and her small horticulture business have all taken second place to husband's graduate study or teaching schedule, and children's needs. For Porter there is almost no evidence of double standard--until she begins to think about making a place in her life for marriage and children. She slips then into acceptance of giving up her work or studies for a number of years.

Overlapping and intertwined with the theme of the double standard are themes of motherhood and work conflict, effects of the women's movement, and fear of failure and of success -- related to how women view themselves and how society defines them. Sylvia Cobb always knew she would be at home with children. She became pregnant just at the time when real career possibilities at Time magazine opened up for her. Melendez found herself pregnant before registration but went to college anyway (the first time) finding out when her twins were born that she couldn't continue with her plan of having her mother care for her babies. This job was hers. The child-care conflict for Santos was her greatest worry. For Deller it clearly defined her schooling limits, and for Porter it is a shadow on the horizon.

The women's movement, along with the whole push for civil rights, has touched in one way or another all five participants. The opening up of opportunity for Santos is surely connected to her vision of going as far as she can go. Melendez, also the first in her working-class family to go to college, never became totally involved in "that feminist thing" (her term). "I had some feelings," she says, "But women had their place, the wife and mother." As she became more aware of the implicit sexism and racism in the counseling system at her community college, and of the network of women in the community college Women's Center, she became active and experienced in the world of making things happen for herself and for other women. Her discussins with women often centered around the difficulties inherent in the role conflicts of women with families.

Sylvia Cobb was never a "libber." In her world, as an only child in a family dominated by women, she was aware that women could, and did, do anything men did. At the community college she is able to turn the experience with her chauvinist lab partner into a triumph. She notes the proportion of women and men students in her technical courses--approximately one to five--and mentions that the women now do better than the men in drafting, a formerly all-male stronghold. She falters only temporarily at the math barrier, but learns how to "follow directions" and get through calculus. Throughout her community college course of study, she keeps one eye cocked at her home life as mother and housekeeper. Proud of both of her children's work in technical fields, she considers this route a natural and respectable one if people could accept individual rather than gender roles. At no time do we have the impression that cultivated tastes have flown out the window; on the contrary, Cobb is saving her reading and serious drawing for purposes of pleasure. She gives us a glimpse of what education might be like if vocational and academic pursuits were freely available to all persons regardless of gender or class and equally respected as alternate or concomitant facets of the educational picture. Class attitudes are thinly veiled by the feelings Deller, Melendez, and Cobb express about vocational studies and liberal arts, and the community college versus the university.

The compensations for the difficulties in juggling motherhood and studies are forthrightly put by the four mothers. Melendez says, "I've been planning it and it's going to work out." Her goal is a magnet so powerful that the barriers and problems of single motherhood, "minority" status, and poverty are not too high. Cobb has found the least painful, well-compensated way to make a living and feed her children, to have a good life in her non-work hours, and to reduce the "sea of words" to a manageable puddle. Deller has found her field of expertise without compromising her strong family-caretaking role. Whether she has compromised herself is another question. Reading between the lines, we can see her returning again, at a later date, to continue her search for intellectual self-definition. Santos has already made her posittion clear: it is painful to do something for yourself when it feels as if "you are doing something bad" to your children, but she has made up her mind. It must be done.

The theme of time stands out in these stories. Time means something different to older students: no longer the social, carefree college days; the days before the serious settling down of life. Life is already half over for many returning students; time will have a different quality. Porter, only seven years past the usual entering age for students, conveys a sense of pressure, "hitting the books," getting ready for transfer, studying hard, not socializing; considering her near future of "time-out"--the imperative of the woman's body-clock--I must get through with this now so I can stop time and have children and go back later to my work, well-prepared. The time when one gets married, has children, does work, is different for men and women and is partly ruled by the ticking of the body-clock, but more by the assumptions that we make, based on who bears the child. Women are more likely to opt for short-term commitments, in terms of work, for two-year than four-year colleges, for dropping out before it's done, because other things--people--take first place. Carol Gilligan has recently expanded upon this theme. Women are first of all relational; among men, relationships "often are cast in the language of achievement" (Gilligan 1982). For many women, higher education has been an extension of high school, an obligation to be well-rounded, social, trying out a traditional occupation. Desire for education and career has not been compatible with the prevalent socialization of women before marriage.The stories of our participants make clear that as older returning students women now view their schooling with a new intensity and sense of purpose. We see also in these stories indications that we are one short generation away from attitudes and behaviors that the women's movement has been able to cut a narrow swath through, although not enough of a swath to shake the power of institutional sexism as well as the sexism that lives in our own bones.

The presence of older women students in the community college brings with it a different possibility of time for work, for achievement. The latter part of life, after children have been raised and launched, is a time that may be reserved for returning to deferred study and accomplishment. The stories of our participants contain occasional flashes of the excitement of discovery, the pure joy of feeling like a whole, growing and worthwhile person,feelings not experienced until now. Deller will love her work til she is ninety, and Melendez will "never retire." Even the younger returning women feel different. Porter notices that her seven-year difference means that her style, her expectations, the quality of her work, are different. Santos, Melendez, Cobb, and Deller--each reaches that same point at her time. The time depends on life circumstances--which depend on husbands and children, potential or real.

The community college and the returning women student fit together; two movements intersect in time. Women whose children's care and school keep them close use the community college for their own best purposes. A community college, with accessibility both physical and psychological, was first choice for these returning women. They found the community college to be more malleable, more adaptable, more welcoming, than the formidable university or the state college. We might conclude then that the community college is for people who see themselves as not being able to do anything else: for women, for example, who are "trapped" by the exigencies of their double role and whose self-esteem has been eroded by subtle pressures of family and schooling. But our participants are clearly saying that they are making the most of their choice. The community college open door has opened more doors for them. They are also saying that a commitment to the best education of women means a commitment to increasing numbers of women faculty and staff, providing quality child care, providing funds and support for women's centers, and adequate counseling. It means encouraging more serious college work (technical or academic) than the occasional sampling of a course. As our interview data show, older women want desperately to be a part of the educational mainstream, to have worthwhile careers and to be paid equitably for their work. But they don't want to give up children and home concerns, or to give up "rounding off the rough edges," or to compromise their dreams of succeeding in a field of their choice.

Section Five:

Conclusion

Chapter Fourteen

What We Have Learned about In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing

Introduction

In Chapter Two of this report we outlined the basic methodology of the in-depth phenomenological interviewing we carried out in this research. To recapitulate briefly, we conducted three one-and-one-half-hour interviews with each of our participants. In the first interview we concentrated on the experience of the participants before they came to the community college. We urged participants to go as far back in their lives as possible in order to gain an historical context for their experience in the community college. In the second interview we concentrated on their work in their community college. We asked the participants to recreate the concrete detail of their work experience. In the third interview, we asked our participants to reflect on the meaning of their work to them. In order to allow time for a relationship to build between the interviewers and the participant, and in order for the effects of the process to be cumulative, each interview in the series was normally spaced from approximately three days to a week apart.

The format for this interviewing structure was suggested to us by the work of Kenneth Dolbeare and David Schuman (Schuman 1982). The theoretical framework is a phenomenological one which stresses the meaning people make of their experience as being crucial to the way they carry out their work. The series of three interviews was therefore developed to gain access to the meaning participants made of their work by providing for their reflections on the constitutive factors which composed their experience(Schutz 1967).

What follows are our reflections on what we have learned about in-depth interviewing as we have worked with this methodology over the last four years. We have organized this chapter in a way that reflects the actual process of in-depth interviewing: (1) The Purpose of In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing; (2) The Relationship between Interviewers and Participants; (3) Issues of Access and Contact;(4) Selecting Participants; (5) The Structure and Process of In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing; (6) Conducting the Interview; and (7) Working with the Data.

We shy away from a cook-book "how to do it" approach to a discussion of in-depth interviewing which might provide a false dichotomy between the techniques of interviewing and a broader sense of the purpose, ethics, and epistemology of in-depth interviewing. At the same time, we do hope that these reflections will contribute to the understanding of others who are facing the complexities of doing qualitative research in education and who are using the methodology of in-depth interviewing.

The Purpose of In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, not to test hypotheses, and not to "evaluate" as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience rather than being able to predict or control the experience. The purpose of in-depth phenomenological interviewing, then, is to have participants reconstruct their experience and reflect on the meaning they make of that experience.

We were interested in the experience of community college faculty members because we are trying to understand the complexities of community college education in this country. A basic approach to understanding the complexities of any organization is to understand the experience of those who comprise the organization and carry out its processes. One way to have accomplished this might have been through participant observation. But participant observation places the burden of meaning-making almost totally on the observer. Our interest was in having the meaning we made of the work of community college faculty informed as much as possible by the meaning the faculty themselves made of their work. In-depth interviewing provided the best access to that meaning. It provided a way to bridge the chasm that always lies between people trying to understand the experience of others. (See Becker and Geer 1969, for a discussion of the comparative values of in-depth interviewing and participant observation.)

In trying to know and understand our interviewees' experience, it was important to us to understand that they were neither subjects nor objects of our study. They were participants with us in the research work. The stress was always on the reconstruction of their experience and the meaning they made of it. They were constantly active in the research; and their individual experience, by the very nature of the process, was affirmed as significant. We interviewed them because we assumed that their experience was important to understand if we wanted to understand community college education in this country.

We did not seek "answers" to questions because "answers" do not adequately reflect the complexity of a person's experience. We did not concentrate on their opinions because we wanted to understand the concrete details of their experience on which their opinions must have been based. We were not testing hypotheses because our goal was to understand their experience and develop our meaning-making from the meaning they made, rather than use them to prove or disprove a notion we had. In concentrating on the reconstruction of experience and the meaning made of that experience, the way each participant makes sense of his or her experience is made at least partially accessible to us.

The Relationship between Interviewers and Participants

Among the many descriptive options, we have found it useful to talk about interviewing as a "relationship" between the participant and the interviewer(s). Campbell and Stanley (1963) in their influential essay, "Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research in Teaching," cite a list of threats to internal and external validity in an experiment. Among the chief threats to external validity is the bias of the instruments that collect the data and bias in the relationship of researcher and the object of the researcher's inquiry. They describe a series of experimental conditions and controls designed among other things to objectify the relationship between the researcher and the object of the researcher's inquiry. Such objectification is part and parcel of the experimental tradition and of quantitative research more generally. The approach is borrowed from the traditions of research in the physical sciences.

While steps can be taken to guard against conflict of interest between researchers and their participants which would affect the internal validity of the interviews, on the whole those who use in-depth interviewing as a methodology cannot escape the fact that it embodies a relationship between themselves and participants. That relationship denies the possibility of separating what comes to be known from the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and participant. One of the basic distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research is that the latter tries to accentuate a dichotomy between subject and object, between knower and what is known, whereas qualitative research tends to work against that dichotomy if not denying it completely. Sources as diverse as Robert Persig (1974), William James (1947), and Karl Mannheim (1975) argue for an epistemological view that rejects the notion of objectivity as normally pursued in quantitative research in education.

The issue is that knowing and understanding presuppose not a separation of subject and object but an intimacy achieved through language, a coming together and a sharing of the same ground and space as much as possible by the interviewer and participants. Many commentators on the interviewing process have stressed the notion of "trust" as key to the development of such a knowing and understanding. We came to believe that an essential ingredient in developing trust in the relationship between interviewer and participant was to assure that that relationship was as equitable as possible. By equitable we mean that the relationship was governed by notions of fairness.

Much is inequitable at the start of the interviewing process. First of all, except when researchers are interested in interviewing elites, most people who do research are in positions of status and power, at least as perceived by the participants. Differences in the power relationship between participant and interviewers flow from differences in age, gender, social class, race, religion, and position. The differences in perceived power affects the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the participant and therefore affects the nature of what is known and understood through that relationship. In our research with community college faculty we were constantly contending with the effects of these factors as we university-based, white researchers interviewed community college faculty, some of whom were women and members of minorities.

One way we developed to move towards an equitable relationship was to be as explicit as possible about our work. Because we were not testing hypotheses or seeking answers to predetermined questions, the tensions between being explicit about the basic structure and process of our research and the possibility of distorting our data were significantly reduced. Therefore, from the time we made contact with our participants we were explicit about who we were, what we were doing, and how we intended to use the material we gathered. These matters were described in detail in a written consent form which we developed for this work (see Appendix). In addition, we described in detail the rights of the participants to withdraw from the process and to exclude the use of specific material from their interviews if they so chose. We also outlined what steps we would take to protect their identity, being careful in the process not to claim too much, since in presenting in-depth profiles of participants (which was our goal) it is almost impossible to guarantee complete anonymity.

As we went about the process of making contact with participants, we used a minimum of intervening third parties so that we could take direct responsibility for the level of explicitness about the process which we sought. Recognizing the importance of the issue of reciprocity in such research (Glazer 1972), we attempted to be clear to our participants about what we wanted from them and what they could and could not expect from us and our work. By being as explicit as possible about ourselves and the nature of our work, we hoped to secure an informed willingness to participate in our interviews.

In addition to the intrinsic value of being explicit about what we were doing, we believed that being as open and specific as possible about ourselves and the nature of our work would move the interviewing relationship in the direction of equity between us and our participants. Moving toward that ideal is a complicated process. Despite our attempts to make the interviewing process explicit and fair, the participants' perceptions of our position, status, and association with funding agencies provided an antithesis at times to a sense of equity between us. This dialectic was intensified when we as white, university-based researchers interviewed community college faculty and staff who were members of a minority. Despite individual efforts on our part and on the part of our participants, the interviewing relationship that we were able to develop was affected by the broader history and social reality of racism and sexism. The potential for distrust and tension that is the fruit of discrimination is not easily overcome in an interviewing relationship between nonminority researchers and minority participants. In a real sense the quality of social research capable of being done in our country is limited by the quality of our collective social experience.

At the same time it would be a mistake to overestimate and overgeneralize the inhibiting effects of racial and gender differences between our participants and ourselves. In addition to discussing such issues as straightforwardly as possible with participants, we found that the structure of the interview process itself served to mitigate the tensions that could emanate from racial, gender, and status differences. The length of the interviews and the span of time over which they were conducted gave us an opportunity to build a relationship with participants which a "one-shot" interview process would not allow. Moreover, by asking participants to reconstruct in detail aspects of their early life with family, neighborhood, and school, and in stressing the importance of the participants' actions and the relationship of those actions to an autobiographical, social, and organizational context, in most cases we were able to establish our interest in and respect for the participant's story. That interest which is central to the methodology of in-depth interviewing, was the most effective means we had of moving toward a sense of equity in our interviewing relationship with all our participants(Seidman, Sullivan, Schatzkamer 1983).

Issues of Access and Contact

The most important understanding we have gained about access and contact is that how access is developed and contacts are made affects every step of the interviewing process that follows. The interviewing relationship begins at the point a first contact is made with a potential participant and is affected by how access to that participant is developed.

In most cases our access to participants was established by another person. Realizing that the equity of the interviewing relationship would be affected by how we achieved access to potential participants, we decided to avoid making contact with participants through referral of people who were higher up in the hierarchy in which they worked. Whenever possible, we achieved access through peers of participants. In the case of faculty, therefore, we avoided gaining access to them through the referral of administrators. We avoided making contact with counselors through the director of counseling offices, for example. We did not want our research to be perceived as associated with the administrative hierarchy of the colleges we were visiting. We wanted to keep the power relationship between us and our participants as much as possible a factor of our direct relationship and as little as possible a factor of our participants' relationship to third parties which we could neither fully understand nor affect.

As a general guide to our work, we tried to minimize the role of third parties. As soon as possible we took direct responsibility for the relationship that would develop between us and our participants. While at times it might have seemed convenient to use third parties to convey the nature of the work, it became clear to us very soon that third parties could not understand or communicate fully the nature of our work. Asking them to do so would be asking them to take on a responsibility that they really could not assume. One of the most difficult contact sessions we had with a group of community college faculty was set up by a colleague who communicated to the faculty her assumptions about our work. The contact meeting we had was beset by tensions since our assumptions about our work were inconsistent with what had been communicated to the faculty and a feeling of mistrust and tension set in so rapidly that we finally decided that we could not interview at that site.

We interviewed a total of one hundred faculty, staff, and students for this research. In almost every case we made a contact visit with the participant before the interviews themselves began. In that contact visit we would discuss the history of our work, its present status, and what we intended to do with the material we gained from the interviews. We would explain how we had found the name of the participant and why he or she was being considered as a participant. We would try to clarify as much as possible the nature of the interviews we were proposing. Many of our participants had a notion of interviews as a process of answering questions that the interviewer would ask. We explained that we had no pre-set questions except those that provided the framework for each of the three interviews. We cautioned them that, since we were interested in their life stories, the interviews were likely to cover subjects that were personal and perhaps sometimes troubling. While it was never possible to anticipate what the interviewing experience would be like, we used the contact visit to be as explicit about the series of interviews as possible. We tried to avoid a situation in which participants would be unduly surprised by the nature of the interviewing process.

Recognizing the importance of the method of contact and access to the entire interview process, we learned not to rely on the telephone or mail to communicate the essence of the contact visit. Whenever possible we met with our potential participants face to face, since we learned that the energy and thoughtfulness spent on the contact aspects of the interview process would have implications for every step of the interview process to follow.

Selecting Participants

Among the most complex issues in the process of in-depth phenomenological interviewing is the selection of participants. We conducted in-depth interviews with seventy-six community college faculty and staff (and twenty-four students). There are approximately two hundred thousand full- and part-time community college faculty in the United States. Can we have confidence that the faculty we have interviewed are representative of that larger population? Or, to put it in other terms, can we generalize from what we have learned from those we interviewed to those we did not?

Campbell and Stanley point out that in the experimental tradition two approaches to solving the problem of representativeness have been developed. The first is matching, a method which they generally discount. The second, which they affirm as an effective approach to the problem of external validity, is the use of a random or a stratified random sample. However, the use of a true random sample is next to impossible when doing a study based on in-depth phenomenological interviewing. To be truly random, the population from which the sample is chosen must be extremely large, and the final sample itself must be large. To conduct in-depth interviewing of the number of participants which would satisfy the requirements for a random sample is not feasible given normal constraints of time, money, and energy involved in such research. Another constraint on the random-sample approach is that participation in an interview study requires the consent of the interviewed. As soon as consent is built into the process, those that have agreed to participate in the study cannot be said to be selected by a process that is random.

In considering the selection of our participants, we were cautious about accepting the language of "representativeness". The phenomena that comprise experience and the meaning that people make of their experience do not fit easily with the notion of "representativeness." The more we explored people's stories with them, the less it seemed appropriate to think of the constitutive factors of their lives as being representative of the constitutive factors of others' experiences.

Furthermore, the more we explored the experience of our participants and the meaning they made of that experience, the more we became cautious about generalizing from the experience of our participants to the experience of others. Instead we began to see that the issue not as one of representativeness and generalizability but rather one of connectedness. For example, in one of our interviews a woman faculty member talked about how in her position of being acting head of her department she had been systematically ignored by the president and dean of her college in the consideration and evaluation of some of the faculty in her department who were up for promotion. For us the issue was not: Is she the representative woman faculty member whose experience in the hierarchy of her college is generalizable to others?" Rather the question was: Can others who work in the community colleges make connections between her experience and theirs? Is there a commonality of aspects of experience which is shared between the participant and potential readers?

The job of in-depth phenomenological interviewing is to go to such depth in the interviews that surface considerations of representativeness are replaced by a presentation of the complexities of a person's experience in enough detail and depth so that others can connect their experience with that of the participants. For example, in one of our interviews a student recounted the history of how she came to go to a community college. She talked about how her older sister was considered smarter than she by parents and teachers. She discussed how in third grade there came a time when she did not understand something in arithmetic and she was powerless to tell the teacher, "Hey stop, don't rush on, I don't understand," and how from that point on she began to slip in math to the point where she lost all confidence in herself. She talked about how in high school she lived two different lives, running with two different sets of friends, one into drinking and drugs, the other into reading and drama. She described how her teachers labeled her. She talked about how a counselor "tracked" the smart rich kids into private schools, the smart poor kids into the state university, and how the kids like her who were poor and "unmotivated" were written off. She told about how she applied to the state university and the local community college, and how, because the community college made her feel that they wanted her to come there and the state university in its size and complexity made no such personal contact with her, she decided to go to the community college.

The issue for us was not whether this participant was "typical" or "representative" or whether we could generalize from her experience to draw some conclusions. The issue for us is whether potential readers will be able to connect to her story, make meaning of it for themselves, and thereby, through the story of an individual, gain greater understanding of the complexities of an institution and the experience of people within it.

While not conventionally concerned with representativeness of individuals, we were concerned with the representativeness of the historical, social, and organizational context within which our participants worked. The history of community colleges, the interaction of their assumed egalitarian mission with the realities of social class, gender, and race in U.S. society, and the nature of the hierarchy within the organization and within higher education, provide a context that all who work in community colleges share. By selecting participants who worked within a context which is generalizable we established the foundation for people in community colleges where we have not interviewed to connect to the stories of participants whom we have interviewed.

In in-depth phenomenological interviewing we try to change the terms of the discussion concerning the notion of representativeness. That does not mean that we did not take the nature of our population into consideration when we selected participants. Faculty in community colleges are men and women; some teach in academic transfer areas, others teach in vocational and terminal programs; some are members of minorities; some have terminal degrees. We considered these factors when building our sample. Our goal was to build a sample that was fair to the larger population but not because we hoped that our sample would be "representative." We assumed rather that our intended audience of community college faculty and staff would connect more readily to stories of people who shared characteristics they recognized in themselves and their own situation.

The more we worked with the process of in-depth phenomenological interviewing, the more we rejected the notion of representativeness. In politics, it is a notion fraught with difficult tensions, but necessary, given the scale of our communities and organizations. In research with nonhuman subjects, the notion that one material or substance can be used to represent the properties of another can be sustained. In social research with human beings, however, the flux of experiences, the interaction of the rational and the irrational, the separateness that constitutes most human experience --these factors make the notion of representativeness untenable. By being fair to the universe of our participants (choosing faculty and staff to interview who were male and female, minority and nonminority, in vocational and academic programs, from different regions of the country, differing in age and experience) we avoided at least some bias in the selection of participants. Mainly, however, we tried to go deeply enough into the reconstruction of our participants' experience and the meaning they made of it, connecting that experience and meaning making to larger social and organizational contexts which we believed could be considered representative so that readers with whom we ultimately share our work would be able to connect their experience to the experience of our participants and make their own meaning of it.

In addition to trying to build a sample that was fair to the population, we avoided participants from contexts that were idiosyncratic and individuals who had "axes to grind." For example, we made a contact visit to one community college that had just gone through a very divisive episode surrounding the forced resignation of its president. The faculty in that institution were deeply polarized. In our study we were not concerned with the ad hominem politics of a college, nor did we want our research to become entangled in such politics. We were interested in having faculty reconstruct their experience of work in their college and reflect on the meaning of their work; we were not interested in having participants use the occasion of the interviews to vent their feelings or to get back at someone in their institution. Although such material may seem powerful and of interest, our experience has been that it was not the reconstruction of the complexity of the factors involved in the person's experience but rather a set of strong opinions. When we have come to look at the language for possible inclusion in our writing, we have seen that such material may demean the participant and may shed very little light on the complexity of his or her experience.

Another caution we learned to exercise as we built our sample of participants was to avoid persuading a person who was reluctant to be interviewed to join the study. We have seen such reluctance take different forms. On occasion it is straightforwardly expressed. A potential participant may say to us that he or she really does not enjoy talking very much and is afraid that he or she "would not give you what you wanted." More frequently, reluctance is expressed under the cover of schedules and time. People will say that they don't have the time to commit themselves to three ninety-minute interviews spread out over three weeks.

When we first began our interview work we were somewhat anxious about securing participants. When confronted with either directly stated or indirectly stated reluctance on the part of potential participants, we would try to assure them that they would find the experience worthwhile and to meet their objections or reservations with a response intended to persuade them to join. Sometimes, such reassurance resulted in the person's agreeing to participate and indeed the interview worked out well.

On another occasion, after persuading a person to participate, the person remained a reluctant participant throughout the series of interviews and at the end of the process wrote us a letter expressing concern about how the material she shared might be used. Her letter to us made it very difficult to use most of the material and, on one level at least, the time and effort put into interviewing this reluctant participant was wasted. We learned that in order to keep the relationship between us and the participants headed in the direction of equity, it was important for us not to take more than our share of responsibility for the interviews and equally important for the participants to affirm a share of responsibility through the nature of the active commitment they were willing to make to the process.

Conversely, we also learned to be cautious about the potential participant who agreed too quickly to take part in the interview sequence. Some people, during a contact visit, listened briefly to what we had to say, and then immediately said something like, "Sure, no problem," without giving the process much thought. We learned, when we ran into such a situation, to go even more deeply into an explanation of the process, to try to be even more careful about highlighting the potential tensions in the interview series. At one point we were beginning an interview with such a participant and were asking him to read carefully the permission form which we had prepared for the series of interviews. He skimmed the form, said "No problem," and dashed off his signature. At that point, my colleague asked that he take the time to carefully read the form. The point was that we were purposeful about the work we were doing and it was important to the process for our participant to be as purposeful about his participation as we were about our interviewing.

The Structure and Process of In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing

The distinguishing factor of the interviewing methodology we have used in this research is that it attempts to have the participants reconstruct the concrete details of their experience, and reflect on the meaning of that experience. To facilitate that process we developed a series of three interviews modeled after the work of Ken Dolbeare and David Schuman (Schuman 1982) in which each interview had a definite purpose within itself and within the sequence of three interviews.

Interview One

In the first interview we asked the participants to, in effect, tell us the story of their lives up to the point that they joined the faculty of a community college. When we first started our interviewing we characterized the interview as being about "how the participants came to work in a community college." We began to see, however, that such wording carried with it an assumption of being able to trace a linear series of events in a person's life that led him or her to a job in a community college. Participants then might try to impose some order and linearity in their life story to try to satisfy what they thought we wanted to hear. Our interest was in gaining understanding of the constitutive factors in a person's life up to the point of becoming a community college teacher. Those constitutive factors would establish an autobiographical context for understanding their experience in the community college and provide the basis for reflecting on the meaning of their work in the third interview. To avoid the sense of imposing a linear mold on their experience, we changed the opening question of the first interview from "How did you come to work in a community college?" to "Tell us as much about your life before coming to the community college as possible, going as far back in your life as possible."

Often when beginning this interview, participants would start from their recent past, their college experience, for example, and work up to the present from there. But we were interested in their telling us about their family, childhood experience, schooling, and early work experiences. Even though we had explicitly talked about the nature of the first interview during the contact process, it was not possible to completely convey the personal nature of the first interview beforehand. It was not unusual after the completion of the first interview to have a participant say to us, "I didn't know that you would want to hear about my family. What does all that have to do with my teaching in a community college?" As well as we could in such situations, we would explain that the reconstruction of early life experiences of family and schooling established a context for understanding their later experiences. Given the strength that the notion of "objectivity" as an ideal has in our culture, it was sometimes difficult to establish trust in a process that did not make a strong separation between personal and professional, and between subjective and objective.

Despite the tensions that occasionally arose with participants who were surprised and suspicious about our interest in their earlier lives, we came to realize that not skating over their earlier experience, especially the childhood years, was crucial methodologically. A careful reconstruction of childhood and later experiences before coming to the community college would most often start a process of connecting on the part of the participants that led them to be more thoughtful, reflective, and serious as they participated in the following interviews.

Interview Two

In our second interview, usually held three days to a week later, we would begin by asking our participants if they had any follow-up to the previous meeting. While we wanted to focus on the purpose of the second interview, we learned that if our participants had something on their minds from the previous interview, it was important to learn this at the beginning of the interview. Although the question, "Do you have any follow-up to the last interview?" sometimes became pro forma and usually elicited a polite demurral, on occasion it gave a participant who was upset or feeling unfinished about something in the first interview the chance to raise the issue and have us try to resolve or clarify the matter.

The second interview itself concentrated on what our participants' work was like. We were not asking them their opinion of their work and their institution; nor were we asking about their philosophy of education. Our central concern was to have them recreate the concrete details of their experience. Sometimes we would ask them to take us through a day with them as though we were their shadow. We would ask them to recreate their actions and what they were thinking of when they did what they were doing.

Another approach to having them recreate their experience was to ask them to recreate incidents with students, colleagues, administrators. In recreating an incident, for example with a student, Deborah Proctor told us of the tension that built between her and a student about what she considered the student's unrealistic expectations to transfer to a four-year college. She told about meeting with the student and trying to be gentle with him, and about his resistance. The student kept on asking her what he could do to get into the program he wanted. Finally she told us that she said, "Look, there is nothing that I can do to get you into that school and besides I don't think, given your record here, that you could do the work there even if you did get in." She then told how the student walked out and never returned. Proctor talked about how badly she felt about losing patience, getting frustrated, and telling the student that there was a limit to his potential. She was bothered, she said, because she had devoted her professional life to helping people realize their potential, and she knew that damage could be done when a person in authority denied that potential.

When she finished the story it was clear that she told it to us because the incident had bothered her and was still affecting her. A little later she told us about a student whom she had seen three or four times. She had worked with him to straighten out his program so that he would be sure to have the requirements he would need to transfer to a four-year program. This student got into the four-year program and wrote her a note saying how much he appreciated her help. She showed us the note and said how pleased and surprised she was to get it.

Having participants recreate incidents in their experience allows them to reconstruct their action and interaction in their work. It establishes vividly what they do in their work and lays the basis for later reflection on the meaning of that work. Such stories allow the interviewers the chance to "see" the participant in action and know, through the story, what the participant's experience is like . Telling a story requires that participants link action and character and develop a progression from beginning to middle, to end. In ordering their experience in a story, participants develop a reconstruction of their experience that has within it indications of the meaning they have made of the experience.

An important aspect of the second interview is that it deals with the present work of the participant. There is a difference between oral history and phenomenological interviewing. In oral history, the interviewer is asking the participant to recreate events that happened sometime in the past. The historian is interested in recreating the past through his or her interview. The function of phenomenological interviewing is to recreate aspects of the person's present experience in the context of past experience and then to explore the meaning the participant makes of her or his experience. Present instantaneously becomes past and the time differentiation between oral history and phenomenological interviewing can become elusive; but the distinction in focus and purpose remains clear. In phenomenological interviewing we are interested in exploring the participants' present situation and the meaning they make of it. In oral history, the historian is interested in exploring a situation some time in the participants' past.

Interview Three

In the third interview we asked the participant to reflect on the question, "What does your work mean to you?" On the surface this question seems the most difficult, and it inevitably elicits the most questioning about our intent from our participants. Often the participant will equate the question of meaning with the question of reward and satisfaction. A significant number of our third interviews start with the participant saying, in response to our question, "Well, I get a lot of satisfaction out of my work."

The question of meaning however is not one of satisfaction or reward, although they may play a part in it. The question of meaning asks the participant the following: "Given what you have said about your life up until the time you came to work in a community college, and given what you say about what your work is like, how do you make sense of your work in your life?" Making sense or making meaning requires that the participant look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation. The exploration in the first interview often sets the stage for the participant's going beyond the frequent initial response of, "Oh, I really came to my teaching job here by accident." It begins to substitute some consciousness as to how events in their life had interacted, how decisions were made with particular intents at various times that led them to their work. In the second interview we ask the participants to recreate details and to tell stories about episodes in their work--what their work is actually like. The combination of exploring the past to clarify the complexities of the events that led participants to where they are now, and the establishing of the concrete details of their present experience establishes conditions for reflecting on how they make sense of what they are doing in their lives. The third interview can only be productive if the foundation for it has been established in the first two interviews.

Sometimes the nature of the sense that is made is a recognition that given where participants thought they were headed and given what they actually do, their work does not make sense. In one sense of the word, their work is "meaningless." Other times, the meaning that participants come to is a recognition of the relationship between what they do as individuals and the structure in which they work. Sometimes the sense that is made comes in the form of an affirmation of the work that the participant is doing. That affirmation reflects an awareness of the trails in their lives that led them to where they are, a consciousness of what they enjoy about the work and what they don't, and a resolution of conflict that comes through recognizing the initiative they have and the limits of that initiative provided by the structure.

The Process of the Three Interviews

We learned over the time we have been interviewing to respect the structure of the three interviews. Each interview serves a purpose within itself and within the series of three interviews. Sometimes, in the first interview, a participant would start telling an interesting story about his or her present work situation, which was to be the focus of the second interview. It was tempting, because the information was interesting, to pursue the lead the participant was giving us and forsake the structure of the interview. But to do so would have eroded the sense of purpose and focus of each interview and the sense of knowing what we were about in the process. There were many times in the process of interviewing when we had to make decisions about paths to follow, and in order to make those decisions, we had to maintain a focus on what each interview was about. The second and third interviews build on the previous interviews. Each interview sets the stage for the next and all three interviews interact with each other. Each interview provides a foundation of detail that helps illumine the next interview. To take advantage of the interactive nature of the sequence of interviews required that we adhere to the purpose of each.

Related to the issue of keeping the focus of each interview, is the issue of who controls an interview, the interviewer(s) or the participant. At the time of contacting a participant we were very clear about the structure of the interview process, and we made our invitation based on our potential participant's understanding what each of the three interviews would be about. Before the start of the first interview, we went over with the participant a written consent form which described who we were, what we were doing, the process we would use, how we would use the material, and the rights of the participant in the process. We asked the participant to read this written consent form, ask any questions they had, and then sign it. We signed a duplicate which we gave to the participant. The exchange of signatures on the written consent form indicated our mutual agreement to the conditions of the process. What we then assumed was that the participant would cooperate with our intent and that we would do what we said we would do.

Such cooperation is sometimes more easily described than realized. Usually when a participant jumped to a topic that really was the subject of another interview, he or she would get back on the focus of the present interview at the request of the interviewers. Often what might appear as an issue of control was really one of the interviewer knowing what the purpose was in each interview and sticking to that purpose. On rare occasions a participant chose not to cooperate with the interviewer either by not being willing to stick to the subject of the interview, or by, for example, not being willing to reconstruct his or her experience but only to respond to specific questions that were asked. The problem was serious. We had one such participant who consistently tried to change the conditions of the interview process by asking us to ask specific questions which he would then answer. Given the lack of cooperation with the process , it might have been more fruitful to discontinue the interviews rather than participate in the tension his discomfort with the process reflected. There is a logic to the interviews, and to lose control of the direction of the interviews is to lose the power of that logic and the benefit from it.

Duration and Timing of the Interviews

Each of our three interviews was one and one-half hours long. An hour seemed too short and seemed to carry with it a consciousness of a standard unit of time. Two hours seemed too long . At times it was tempting at the end of the ninety minutes to keep going, because what was being discussed at that point was of considerable interest. But after going beyond the established time once or twice, we found that a sense of diminishing returns set in. By keeping to our structure we demanded of ourselves that we be more focused and purposeful in our interviewing. Going beyond the originally-set time allowed for unravelling of our sense of purpose and our participants' sense that we would do what we said we would do. The people we were interviewing were busy people who were giving a chunk of their time to work with us. In order to maintain their confidence we soon realized that it was important to keep to the structure and duration of the interview that we had established.

In the course of our interviewing over the past few years, we tried variations on our primary model of spacing interviews three days to a week apart. Those variations were usually necessitated by the schedule of our participants and we thought it was better to conduct an interview under less than ideal conditions than not at all. On occasion, therefore, when a participant missed an interview because of an unanticipated complication , we would double up an interview. That is, we might conduct interview one and two during the same afternoon rather than spacing them a few days or a week apart. On the opposite end of the continuum, on occasion a participant might not be available until two or three weeks later for the next interview, so that the space between the interviews would be over-extended. After three years of experience with the basic model of three interviews spread three days to a week apart and variations on that model, it has become clear to us that the three day to a week spacing is decidedly preferable.

The three-day to a week spacing allows time for the participant to mull over the preceding interview and yet be not so far removed from the next interview that the connection between the two is made difficult. In addition, the spacing allows us to work with the participant over a two to three week period. The passage of time allowed for the possibility that on any one interview day we might be interviewing a participant under idiosyncratic conditions. In addition the fact that we come back for two to three weeks to talk for an hour and a half affected positively the development of trust in the relationship between the participants and us. We did not interview the participant in one sitting-- come into his or her life, and then leave it immediately. With the contact visits, the telephone calls and letters to confirm schedules and appointments, and the three actual interviews, we established a substantial relationship between ourselves and the participants over time, a relationship we believe necessary for the success of the process.

Conducting the Interview

The primary role of the interviewer is to listen and the primary role of the participant is to talk. The point of phenomenological interviewing is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience and the meaning he or she makes of it. One of the doctoral students in our interviewing seminar expressed it quite directly. She said, "Look, what you are trying to do is to have the participant recreate the phenomena in her life; if you impose the phenomena of your experience on that of the participant, what you are getting is not her experience but yours."

The type of listening we did when we interviewed was very hard work. It took active concentration and silent working with what we were hearing. While we listened we took working notes. We jotted down key words of what our participant was saying as a way of making sure that we were paying attention, especially at the beginning of an interview, and also as a way of keeping track of what was being said so that we could come back to it later. When we did speak in an interview, we spoke purposely. That is, we knew what the purpose of our interview was; we knew how much time the interview would take and where we were in that time span; we knew that we were interested in getting as much concrete detail of our participants' experience as possible.

Three Purposes for Questions

We did not have a list of questions that we were ready to ask and to which we wanted answers. After the initial question of an interview, e.g., "what is your work like?" we asked other questions for specific purposes. First we asked questions when we did not understand something the participant had said. In everyday conversation it is sometimes easier to go along with a conversation not understanding a part of what the person is saying to you. In interviewing, while it may seem simplistic to say so, we found that it was important to the process to ask the participant to clarify what he or she was saying when we didn't understand it. Partly this was because the interviews are cumulative, each part building on the preceding part; not to understand one part would make it difficult to make sense of other parts. Passages in interviews become links to one another in ways that can not be foretold. To not understand a passage is to lose the possibility of its being a link to further understanding later.

On another level, we have found that when we said we did not understand something, the participant realized that we were taking what he or she was saying seriously. Sometimes what we did not understand was technical in nature. In the interview, with Leonard Braddock, whose field was engineering, to understand his field we had to understand sophisticated technical details. We did not have a familiarity with his terminology, and it was tempting to nod agreeably as the participant described the technical details of his work. But by saying directly at various points that we did not understand what was being said, Braddock slowed down and went to a level of basic principles in his field that we could understand. In that process we gained an understanding of the basic principles so that we could better understand the complexities of his work. Moreover, we sensed that Braddock reacted to us differently because we were willing to wrestle with the substance of his field.

In addition to asking questions when we did not understand what we were hearing, we also asked questions when we wanted to hear more about what the person was saying. Often the amplification we were seeking took either the shape of hearing more about what was being said, or more often hearing about the factors leading up to the experience being described. A participant might say something that seemed relatively innocuous, for example, that she no longer taught a certain subject. But in asking how that had come about, we heard a story of a former administrator returning to a teaching position and starting to compete with her for the same courses.

If we asked to hear more about a subject, our question was often to hear more about the concrete detail. Often we found ourselves asking, "Concretely, what does that mean?" or "Can you be more concrete about that?" The more detail about who, what, when, where, and why that we were able to encourage the participants to provide, the stronger was the base for understanding what we were hearing.

Another time that we would ask a question is when we thought that what we were hearing was a public, outer voice instead of what George Steiner (1978) calls the more private, inner voice. After an hour or so of interviewing, one participant was still talking with us as he would talk to an audience of three hundred in an auditorium. We did our best to encourage him to switch gears and give us more of his inner voice. Sometimes we asked with good results a question like; "How would you talk about your work today if you were talking with your spouse?" Even a technique as transparent as that provided a way for participants who perhaps did not even realize that they were talking in a public, outer voice to switch to an inner voice.

There is a language of outer voice to which we have learned to become sensitive. When we heard words being used that clouded more than they conveyed we learned to ask what those words meant. *For example, whenever we heard participants talk* about wanting to be faced with a "challenge," we asked what the word "challenge" meant to them. To us the word "challenge" indicates a certain degree of a problem or obstacle to overcome, and we were never quite sure what was being said when participants talked enthusiastically about seeking "challenges." Another word that was in the same category for us was "adventure." When we heard participants use that word we usually asked what it meant to them. Another word which attracted our attention was "fascinate." When one of our participants told us how he or she was "fascinated" by something that was going on at the college or in his or her life, we paused to ask in what way that word was meant. By our taking our participants' language seriously, they were encouraged to move to a level of thoughtfulness more characteristic of inner rather than outer voice. At times we were met with a measure of disbelief that we would find use of such words worthy of reflection.

Another way we tried to encourage participants to share their inner voice with us was to share our own stories with them. While recognizing that our basic job was to listen, there were times during interviews when something in our own experience connected to what our participant was sharing with us. Without interrupting the participant, when it became appropriate to do so, we might tell a story about our own experience that we connected with what the participant was telling us. At times such sharing encouraged our participant to explore what he or she was saying in even greater depth. There was, however, at least one instance when one of our participants became impatient with our attempt at connecting one of our experiences with his. Although we saw the connection between what we were saying and the story he had just finished, it was not clear to him and what we were saying distracted him from his own train of thought.

Public voice is not untrue. It is guarded. The knowledge that our interviews might someday be published in some form, and the natural reserve of talking to interviewers whom the participants really did not know very well, led to the adoption of a public voice that was safe for the participant. To borrow a concept from Lev Vygotsky's *Thought and Language*(1962), public voice is the equivalent of outer speech. It is explicit, full, and by its very nature shaped by considerations of its audience. Inner voice may be analogous to what Vygotsky and others term "inner speech." The syntax of inner speech is predicative and elliptical. The person is speaking for herself. The purpose of the interviews was to have the participants reconstruct experiences in their lives and reflect on the meaning of them, a task that was personal. At the same time we were asking the participant to make that reconstruction accessible to a larger public. The interviews that we did straddled a tension between inner and outer voice.

It would be tempting to say that as interviewers we always strove to achieve a relationship of trust in which the participant felt comfortable in talking with us in an inner voice. But clearly we were limited in our attempts to do so by the purpose of the interviews. Our subject was the work of community college faculty. While we recognized an integration between personal and professional experience, we were cautious about getting into areas in the interview for which we could take no effective responsibility, and which exploring to any degree would only be troublesome to the participant.

For example, in one interview a participant talked to us twice over the course of the first two interviews about a colleague who had had a nervous breakdown. The fact that our participant came back to this story twice alerted us to his concern about it and make it very tempting to pursue his own experience related to that person. Yet we were concerned that we would be pursuing an issue that might be troubling and stressful to our participant; we were near the end of our third interview so further contact to follow up on any difficulties that would arise would be difficult. We did not pursue the story any further because we were unsure where it would lead us and whether we could be effective in responding to the stress that the story might uncover.

The major purpose of the interviews was to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience and make meaning of it. Keeping that in mind sometimes became difficult when we would listen to a participant and connect things he or she was saying to things said earlier in the interview and with experiences other participants had shared with us. It became very tempting for us as interviewers to make meaning of the participants experience rather than allow the process to build so that it was the participant who was reconstructing the experience and not us.

We developed two ways of keeping ourselves in check. One was to define for ourselves the notion that we would only ask questions when they were real questions. A "real" question was one to which we did not have an answer or response already in mind. Another check on ourselves was to avoid asking leading questions. That is, we tried to avoid asking our participants a series of questions which led them through a series of connections we were making in our minds.

Instead of asking questions to which we already had an answer in mind and instead of leading participants through a series of questions that had an internal logic to us because of the connections we had made, we decided that at times it was best to say directly what we were thinking. We might say what connections we had made between what they had said earlier and what they were saying now. Or we might relate what they were saying to something another participant had shared with us. Then, we would ask participants directly what they thought of the connections we were making. This approach at least has the advantage of being direct. Our experience, though, was that while being direct about what we are thinking avoids the dangers of being manipulative, it often results in a reasonable defensiveness on the part of our participants. That is, the interviews were constructed so that it is the participants who were supposed to reconstruct their experience and make meaning of it; to the extent that we substituted or intruded our own meaning-making into the process of the interview, even when we did it directly, we were in tension with the purpose of the interviews and our participants often recognized and responded to that tension.

The issues involved in how much and what kind of talking we do as interviewers are connected to the problem of what effect the interviewer has on the substance of the interview. Experimentalism strives to achieve an ideal in which the knower is separated from the that which is known and has no effect on the "object" of the study. In trying to understand the experience of people, we believe that this ideal is impossible. "Knowing" itself is a relationship between the knower and that which is known. Rather than trying to eliminate that relationship we try to affirm it within the purposes of our interviews. Who we are and what we say affects what we will hear. There is no way to get around that fact.

The problem for the interviewer is to recognize that effect he or she has and work to make that effect consistent with the purposes of the interview. That is especially important to realize in the cases when white males interview women and members of minorities. Given sexism and racism in our country, the relationship between white males and participants who are either not male or white can be beset with the tensions inherent in our society. The principle of moving to establishing equity in the interviewing relationship was even more important in these situations than when we were interviewing other white males. Our ability to know and understand is affected by the social realities of our country. This is not to say that it is impossible for white males to interview nonwhites and women. It is to say that when doing so, they have to take into account the social context within which they are working.

Some Observations on the Three-Interview Process

As we accumulated experience in interviewing, we noticed something we came to call the "dialectic" of the interviewing process. For example,in the process of doing the three interviews with a participant, we might have what we considered a very successful, engaging, first interview. The participant seemed more than willing to share with us the experience of his or her life before coming to the community college in a voice that was clearly an inner voice. A week would elapse, and bathing in the good feeling of the first interview, we would begin the second. We expected that the process would be cumulative and that we would be able to continue in the same spirit in which we had done the first interview. But what we sometimes found was a participant in the second interview who was much more reluctant to talk, much more guarded and general in what he or she was willing to share with us. As we saw this happen more than once, we began to realize that a sort of reactive process had set in over the week. We speculated that our participants had realized that they had been caught up in the spirit of the first interview, and had shared with us aspects of their lives that they would not normally discuss with people they did not really know. The very success of the first interview established the conditions, then, for the second interview's being more guarded.

It has also worked the other way. We have had initial interviews that were very difficult in which the participant was reluctant to drop a public voice, to move away from opinions to the concrete details of experience. Then after a week elapsed and we came back for the second interview, the participant relaxed with us and was a much more willing participant. By the time of the third interview enough trust seemed to have been established so that the participant was willing to commit a great deal of energy to the last interview.

In trying to develop our relationship with our participants over the three interviews we learned the hard way that the first interview is not the place to "probe" immediately for the deepest inner voice. In one of our early first interviews we realized that what we were getting from our participant was almost totally a public voice. In our inexperience we tried to immediately get to the inner voice. We "pushed" into areas that the participant, we now see with hindsight, was reluctant to discuss. When we called to confirm the date for the second interview, the participant asked for a postponement. We have learned that postponements, difficulties with scheduling the interviews, being late for interviews usually indicate that the participant is having some trouble with the process that needs to be discussed. When we finally got to the second interview we found a tense participant determined to control the direction of the second interview. It was not until the third interview that we established some equity in the relationship between us and the participant.

We learned to avoid taking risks in the first interview that could have a negative effect on the second and third interviews. On the other hand, by the third interview in the sequence, we might decide to take some risks that we would not take earlier since we were close to completing our work with the participant and if we did not try to break through to a different level at that point we never would.

Some Notes On the Language of Interviewing

We have already mentioned words that our participants use, like "challenge," "adventure," and "fascinate," which alerted us to a public level of discourse in the interview. There are also words that we used which were significant to how we saw and understood the process. For example, we very early decided on the word "participant" for the person whom we were interviewing. By using that word we tried to capture the notion of working with the person whom we were interviewing and that person working with us. It seemed to be the word that came closest to expressing the nature of the equitable relationship we tried to build in the interviewing process.

Two words to which we became sensitive were "probe" and "push" as words to describe what we did in the interview process. Both words became distasteful to us as reflecting inequity between interviewers and participants and a process of questioning inconsistent with having a participant reconstruct his or her own experience.

"Questions" and "answers" became another two words that we learned to take notice of if we used them. We were not seeking answers to questions. The notion of "answers" as the word is normally conceived seemed to us too narrow. It bespoke too much of solutions to problems or responses to what someone else wanted to know. We found ourselves using the vocabulary of "explore" and "reflect" to capture the sense of how we were trying to work with our participants.

The words we chose to describe the process in which we were engaged reflected our understanding of that process, our sense of its purpose, and our relationship to our participants. The language we used to describe what we were doing flowed from an interrelated sense of the purpose of interviewing, the nature of the relationship between the participant and the interviewer, and a sense of the relationship between the ethics of the process and the knowing and understanding that can result from this type of work.

Working with the Data

We tape-recorded all our interviews. The taperecorder was essential to the process of interviewing. It provided for a sense of responsibility on interviewers' and participants' parts alike. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the tape recorder can work to make the participant more comfortable rather than less comfortable with the interviewing process. The tape recorder allows the interviewer to concentrate on what the participant is saying and on the interviewing process rather than on recording what is said. Further, it provides a full record of what was said for for later work in the process. For the participant it is a constant reminder that although we encouraged an inner, private voice in the interviews, his or her words were being recorded to be used in a public way. That consciousness of the tape recorder we beieve is a benefit to the process, not a distraction from it. We would not, for example, sacrifice audio quality of the tape recordings by using a tape recorder with a built-in microphone for the sake of unobtrusiveness. The presence of the tape recorder was a constant and appropriate reminder of the delicate tension between the private voice we sought in the process and public use of the interview material we intended.

Our research grants allowed us to have a secretary transcribe each of our interviews. Given the fact that we conducted over three hundred interviews with one hundred participants this was a necessity. It should be noted however that it is not an unmixed blessing. As John Lofland (1971, p. 90) points out, transcribing interviews is a very valuable way of working with the material and is an important first step toward internalizing what has been generated in the interviews. The large size of our participant pool did not, however, permit us ourselves to transcribe our own interviews.

We asked our secretary to transcribe the audiotapes verbatim. We also asked that she include in the transcripts as many of the nonverbal noises as possible such as sighs, laughter, scraping of the chairs, and noises occurring outside the interviewing room—such as that of passing trains, ambulances, and the like. Our intent was to document as well as possible on the transcript everything "of an audio nature" that occurred during the interview. While in the end, a written transcript cannot capture completely the tone of voice, the expression of participants' faces, and their body language, care in being as accurate and complete as possible in the transcription of the tape provides an indispensable approximation of the actual interview.

We also asked our secretary to mark the location on the audio tape at the end of each page of the transcript so that we would be able to go back to the original tape to check on what was said when necessary. Acccurate labeling of the audio tapes themselves, and accurate filing of the transcripts seem to be technical steps of comparative unimportance to the larger issues we have discussed. Yet all the good work done in the process of interviewing can be lost and frustrated by carelessness with such technical matters once the interviewing is complete. (See Lofland 1971, pp. 117-121 for an extended discussion.)

As our secretary transcribed the audio tapes of the interviews, she substituted initials for the names of people, places, organizations, and institutions close to the participants so that a reader of the transcript would not be able to identify readily our participants. We did not guarantee anonymity to our participants; our intent was to develop an in-depth profile of selected participants from the interview material. While we would take steps to disguise identity, anyone who knew the participant well and read the profile would most likely be able to identify him or her.

To disguise the identity of participants we changed their names, shifted place locations and took other, similar steps. Disguise is not a simple matter. For example choosing a pseudonym for a participant has to take into consideration issues of heritage, ethnicity, and meanings and connotations that are consistent with what the profile presents of the person. It is impossible to determine ahead of time unanticipated consequences of the steps in the disguise that we choose to take. Disguising the identity of minority and women participants is especially sensitive since they sometimes are in such a minority in their work settings that they are most readily identifiable. Moreoever, because of their minority status what they talk about in the interviews might make them more vulnerable were their identity to become known.

A tension developed between being explicit about our methodology and our source of data and guarding against the possibility of our published material making our participants vulnerable. That tension affected not only matters of disguise, but also choices of material to be included. In negotiating that tension we were guided by a notion of fairness--to the data and to the participant. If the conflict between being explicit about sources of data and disguising the identity of the participants could not be resolved in any other way, we decided to cloud facts about the source of the data. If material which was compelling somehow demeaned the participant or made him or her vulnerable, we left it out. These decisions were difficult, often not clear cut, and provided a sense of vulnerability for us since there is no control of the consequences of the material once it is made public.

A one and one-half hour interview produces approximately forty pages of double-spaced transcript. For each participant we had about one hundred and twenty pages of double-spaced transcript to read and study. With one hundred and five participants in the study, we had approximately 12,500 pages of transcript with which to work. The import of these numbers is that we learned how important it was, in planning a qualitative research study, to plan enough time for working with the material we gathered. In thinking through the study, our initial focus was on the time we thought it would take to conduct the interviews. We were able to foresee that aspect of the study clearly so that what we did turned out to be very close to the time schedule we had developed. But we did not anticipate fully the enormous job involved in working with qualitative data generated by in-depth interviews. We began "working" with the material we got in an interview while we were getting it. There is no absolute demarcation between gathering material and working with it. Yet, one part of the study focused on gathering the material and another focused on working with it. (Lofland 1971, p. 117-118.) Were we able to start our research over again we might add half again as much time as we originally allowed for working with the material we got.

At least three readers carefully read each transcript. As we read we marked passages that seemed of intrinsic interest to us. Subsequently we labelled each passage that had been marked by one of us according to specific social, historical, and organizational categories that we developed as we read the interviews. From each reader's marked copy we then marked a fourth copy of the interview transcript and "cut and pasted" that copy. That cut and pasted copy would amount to approximately fifty to sixty per cent of the original transcript.

We made a basic decision early in this project on the work of community college faculty that, in order to be as responsible as possible to both our data and our participants, we would present the main body of our findings in the words of faculty themselves. To achieve this goal we decided to develop "profiles" of selected participants. We conceived of a profile as a self-contained, in-their-own-words narrative of how the participants came to work in their community colleges, what their work was like, and what it meant to them.

The decision to present the results of our research primarily in the form of profiles in the participants' own words--rather than to use more limited quotations from participants woven into our own words--reflects two levels of commitment and interest on our part. First, presenting the material in the words of our participants seems to us to be a method of reporting that was most commensurate with the method of research. The goal of in-depth phenomenological interviewing is to have the participants reconstruct their experience and the meaning they make of it. The closest we could come to that reconstruction and meaning-making is by using the words of the participant as fully as possible rather than by substituting our words for their. Second, the idea behind "profiles" is that people's stories--their reconstruction of factors in their life, their bringing order to events, character and themes--convey knowledge and provide a path to understanding that is grounded in the concrete detail of experience.

The process of selecting which of our participants' interviews we would develop into profiles was guided by four criteria: (1) comprehensiveness of material which we had marked in each of the three interviews; (2) level of concrete reconstruction of the participant's experience; (3) issues of potential vulnerability for the participant; (4) relationship to the total interview series that a profile could convey. Of our seventy-six faculty and staff participants we selected forty-five for whom we developed profiles.

The process of developing profiles was one in which each of the cut-and-pasted editions of the transcripts was then reread by three readers. In this reading, we underlined lines in the transcript which we thought could not be left out of a profile. Through this process we developed a narrative of how the participant came to the community college, what his or her work was like, and what it meant to him or her, that we believed presented a compelling picture of the complexities of teaching and working in a community college setting.

After developing profiles for forty-five participants, we grouped them together into chapters that would provide the core of our report on our research. Our analysis of our interview data is provided in two ways: one that is relatively unobservable and one that is relatively open. The unobservable part of the analysis is embedded in all the decisions made along the way from selection of participants for whom to do interviews to selections of materials within each of the interviews for eventual inclusion in the profiles. While we tape-recorded almost all of our research team meetings and the project secretary either transcribed those tapes or took minutes when she was present, the process of material selection remains relatively inaccessible to the public. The flow of decisions and private connections made in long hours of reading, the give and take of discussions in weekly meetings, the sought after consensus and the frequent compromises that are part of working with the data can never be completely presented to an interested reader. We can only present an outline of the process by which we arrived at the selection of material; we can present the criteria used, but unless we were to present a study of our study, the concrete detail of our work, which is finally the most intrinsically valuable aspect of research to the researchers, must remain for the most part private.

The public and accessible part of our analysis is the way we have organized our material into chapters and the commentary we provide on each chapter and on the study in general. The organization and commentary is an attempt to say what we have learned from our work and to make conscious and explicit the connections we have made, the implications we see of what our participants have said to us in our interviews. We bring to bear on those commentaries readings, discussions, and connections with our own experience--some of which we can make explicit by bibliographic citations and explicit attribution, others of which we can make public but the origins remain concealed in all that we bring to our work.

We have learned, finally, from working with our material that the process of in-depth interviewing leads to an illumination of complexity which tends to defy the notion of conclusiveness. What we have come to know is the flux of constitutive factors that make up our participants' experiences and lead to the meaning they make of their work. We began to see connections within participants' lives and among participants which become meaningful to us as we viewed them in the light of broader social, ideological, and organizational forces. That knowing and understanding can lead to a sense of positive conclusions is part of the quantitative tradition which separates subject from object and usually leaves the researcher in a position of hierarchical distance from what is known. That hierarchical separation leads to a certain assuredness about what might be done. In qualitative research such as we have engaged in, the knowing comes from an intimacy and sense of connection that developes between the interviewer and the participant from the process of the interviews . That knowing leads to a sense of understanding that is bounded by the enormous range of constitutive factors which operate in human experience and within organizations. In Chapter Fifteen we will identify patterns and connections we have made and make explicit what those patterns and connections mean to us, but the knowledge we have gained through interviewing does not lead to an easy certainty. The level of conclusiveness to which we can come is appropriately limited by a methodology which illuminates the complexity and wholeness of people's experience rather than simplifying and fragmenting it. The interviewing process leads to a respect for the complexity of our participants' work and broader lives as they are acted upon by social and organizational forces. It leads to a respect for the way their work in community colleges makes sense when the interaction of their individual actions with social and organizational factors becomes known through in-depth interviewing.

Chapter Fifteen

What We Have Learned about the Work of Community College Faculty

What have we learned from the hours of interviewing community college faculty, staff, and students? What do we now know about their work, the meaning they make of it, and its implications for the way community colleges work in our country that we did not know before we began this study? The complexity of what we have learned threatens to defy summary and conclusiveness. Each individual profile presented in the preceding chapters presents a myriad of factors intertwining, moving in among matters of individual psychology, historical and social forces, and organizational realities. Interviewing our participants, reading the transcripts, meeting, talking, debating, wondering, composing, writing, has brought us into a relationship with one hundred people who work and study in community colleges. Through that relationship, we have come to understand some important aspects of the work of community college faculty.

If there is a single most salient understanding to which we have come, it is that community college faculty struggle against enormous historical, social, and organizational pressures in carrying out their everyday work. As we interviewed and worked with the interview transcripts of our one hundred participants, we could not help but come to appreciate how extraordinary these ordinary people are. In their everyday working lives--in their coming into the building, walking through the halls, stopping at the mailroom, opening their office, talking with students, walking to class, working with their students in their classrooms, marking and grading their papers and tests, meeting with students in individual conferences, talking with parents, going to committee meetings, meeting with administrators, grabbing a cup of coffee in the cafeteria, sitting by themselves in the library for a moment, reading and writing, going home to their apartments, homes, families or themselves--they think about making a living in a way that offers something of themselves to students, that shares what they have, that reaches out and connects to students to give them the benefit of what they have had and what they know is important. And their reaching out to students, wanting to "only connect," to share, to give, to inform, to work with, to offer a sense of options, to overcome senses of failure, of little confidence, of limited money, of less than adequate preparation is constantly plagued by forces larger than that with which their individual efforts can be expected to cope.

In a sense, American society has established an institutional Horatio Alger, expecting the community college to defy the realities of class, race, and gender in the society, to play an enormous role of giving the underdog the chance to overcome all odds and to succeed. To change the metaphor, community college faculty play the educational David in combat with the societal Goliath. With less time with their students and with less status and less resources than their counterparts in the rest of the higher education establishment, they are at the bottom of the totem pole. And yet somehow their students are to step out from under that totem pole in such a careful and delicate way that the whole structure does not collapse. They are to be the provider of equal educational opportunity, education with a sense of dignity to all who come to its doors.

But the studies have started to come in that say the community college is not really an educational Statue of Liberty. They suggest that it is not really capable of providing a lever to undo systematic consequences of racism, classism, and sexism, and that, indeed, like other institutions in our liberal society, it may only be able to produce the occasional student Horatio Alger who comes to the college on welfare and leaves on the way to the elite nearby university on scholarship, while scores of other unknown students drop out of the community college to be unheard of again. The transfer rate for community college students to four-year colleges and universities is down to approximately five percent (Cohen and Brawer, 1982, p. 301.) It appears that if a student's goal is to get a four -year degree, going to a community college may actually have a negative impact on his or her attaining that goal(Anderson as cited in Breneman and Nelson, 1981, p. 67). Minority students, especially Blacks, are gaining access to higher education through community colleges. But the sad fact that seems to be emerging is that minority students' chances of completing a baccalaureate degree are substantially reduced if they initiate their college attendance in a community college (Astin 1982, p.99). The statistical analysis conducted in the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 suggests that, "Even after controlling for a wide range of background characteristics, including educational aspirations, enrolling in a community college was a significant and negative factor in determining bachelor's degree completion" (Breneman and Nelson 1981, p. 209).

Nor is the criticism limited to the transfer function alone. The career training programs in community colleges are subject to parallel analyses. The critics challenge the efficacy of the programs. They assert that they reinforce the basic social class system of the country by preparing their graduates for low-level, dead-end jobs (Pincus 1980).

These criticisms have serious implications. Community colleges have become a central educational institution in the United States. There are approximately nine hundred and twenty-six public community colleges. They enroll four million students. Those four million students comprise almost one-third of all higher education enrollments in this country. Of members of minorities who attend institutions of higher eduction in this country, a disproportionate number attend community colleges (Olivas 1979, p.27). They employ 87,800 full-time and 115,400 part-time faculty and expend approximately 6.3 billion dollars annually (Breneman and Nelson 1981, p. 1).

The understanding we have gained of these issues through our interviews and our reading is at least two-fold: one, as Bruno Bettelheim said of the eventual rupture of the relationship between Freud and Jung, "As happens so often in complex psychological relations, the end was evident in the beginning" (Bettelheim 1983, p. 41). The issues the community colleges are facing today were evident in their beginning, but their genesis was lost sight of in the tremendous growth of community colleges in the 1960s and 70s. The junior colleges were not established to create equal educational opportunity. To a considerable extent, they were established at the urging of powerful presidents of elite four-year universities who were trying to model their fledgling institutions after the model of the German university. The junior college would siphon off the mass of students who were beginning to clamor at the doors of American universities—and allow the universities to pursue a course of research,specialization, and elitism.

The language of the early advocates of community colleges was revealing. One California state education officer commenting on the function that community colleges serve to popularize education said, "It would be unwise and unfortunate if all these [community college students] tried to enter a university and prepare for professions which in most cases are overcrowded, and for which their talents and abilities in many cases do not fit them" (Eells 1931, p. 289). President Ray Lyman Wilbur of Stanford University, one of the early advocates of junior colleges, speaks of them "...as providing particularly for that class of men who are mechanically minded, and of women who are domestically minded, the opportunity to improve their abilities" (Eells 1931, p. 289). Throughout Eels' early definitive textbook on community colleges there is the assertion and the urging that the major function of the newly established junior colleges was to provide "terminal education" (a phrase with an inherent contradiction) for those who were not fit for four-year colleges and universities. In fact, over the years there was some frustration on the part of junior college leaders that the students who attended community colleges did not internalize that aspect of the original rationale for the community colleges' existence (Cohen and Brawer 1982, p.197). Community college students persisted in seeing the community college as the first step toward a four-year degree and for a long time they resisted taking full advantage of the career education programs promoted by junior colleges.

The establishment of junior colleges coincided with a period in this country and Europe when science was being used to attempt to relate notions of intelligence to factors of genetic inheritance. It was a time that the IQ test was being perverted from its original intent of providing a diagnostic tool for identifying those children whose lack of success in normal classrooms suggested the need for some form of special education, to a way of measuring the intelligence of groups of people, using that measure to label them, siphon them off, and adjust their aspirations to fit their newly-measured talents. Advocates of IQ measures tried to associate those intelligence quotient scores with genetic inheritance and to see those scores as measures of a single, reified substance called intelligence (Gould 1981, p.146-156).

The language of the early advocates of community colleges reflects those assumptions about intelligence and talent. Junior colleges were created to serve those whose intelligence better fitted them for a terminal education. That the students themselves did not originally cooperate with this notion of what a junior college was supposed to do, did not deter the junior college leadership. Despite the fact that most students who attended community colleges did so with a deeply embedded desire to somehow, someday, get a four-year degree, the junior colleges and the federal government after the Second World War promoted terminal vocational education programs in the colleges. Today, from a historical point of view at least, community colleges are finally doing what the original conceptualizers of the junior college thought was one of its appropriate roles: siphoning off those whose "talents and abilities" do not befit a four-year college education into a two-year junior college program that is terminal.

The tension between terminal and transfer education, reflected in many of the profiles, was built into the original notions of junior colleges at a time when the college-going population was still relatively homogeneous. Basic structural conditions were put in place that could only frustrate those community college faculty,administrators, and a much more heterogeneous group of students,who, in the sixties and early seventies, unaware of the roots of their institutions, saw them as capable of carrying out the egalitarian ideals of the country. Those structural conditions reflect the deep notions of societal stratification dear to the early advocates of junior colleges and serve to directly and indirectly frustrate any attempts of individual or groups of community college faculty to have their college serve egalitarian ideals.

Ironically, a most significant structural condition established in the junior college that serves to reinforce the original stratifying aims and to defy the energy and efforts of community college faculty today, was the separation of research from teaching that is a hallmark of community colleges. That important characteristic of the working conditions of community college faculty is connected to a series of conventional dichotomies which infuse the life of community college faculty and students and contribute to the fact that community colleges can only operate in a way that mirrors the basic inequities of United States society.

The premise upon which teaching was separated from research in the junior colleges was false and the consequences destructive. The early advocates of junior colleges recognized that there was a great deal of poor teaching that occurred in the universities. They chose to understand the quality of teaching in universities as a reflection of the fact that the primary purpose of the university faculty member was to do research. Therefore , they concluded that in order to concentrate on high quality of instruction in the junior college, junior college faculty would not be expected to do research and would therefore concentrate on the constant improvement of their instruction (Eells 1931, p. 340). This separation of research and teaching was reinforced by the fact that the junior college would be limited to the first two years of the college curriculum, and therefore, because the curriculum was of an introductory nature, research on the part of the faculty would not be necessary for them to carry out instructional responsibilities. Indeed, research would interfere with faculty attention to improving their instruction.

That separation of research and teaching embodied within it an anti-intellectual notion of pedagogy and a dichotomy between content and method that basically misconceptualized the nature of teaching and learning. Teaching is basically intellectual work. At its root it is an attitude of mind, a predisposition to looking at the world and the human condition; a commitment to wanting to understand the core of issues, an enjoyment of ideas, a valuing of learning , and an excitement with the growing relationship between self and the world through the medium of knowledge and understanding. At best, research in a faculty member's field is a reflection of that attitude of mind. Publication and the pressure and incentive to publish at its best is a reflection of sharing that attitude of mind. By separating research from teaching, community college faculty have been cut off from an attitude of mind and emotional and intellectual predispositions that are the source of energy for the work of teaching.

The junior and then community college evolved a structure which, by separating research from teaching, misconceived the nature of teaching and cut off its faculty from the very source of energy for their work. They compounded the misconception by forgetting that the original rationale for the separation, as misguided as it was, was intended to give faculty more time to concentrate on good instruction. The notion should have been, if there was any integrity to it in the first place, that the time faculty did not spend on doing research and writing would be spent somehow on better preparation and better execution as teachers. This would call for the same teaching load for community college faculty as for university faculty, with the savings in time and energy, resulting from not having to concentrate on research and publication, being devoted to improving teaching method. But in fact, instead of maintaining the same load, faculty in community colleges were soon teaching loads two and three times as heavy as their colleagues in four-year institutions. The time, space, and energy for improvement of pedagogy, if such a thing was possible in isolation from research in the content area, was eaten up by the extra teaching load. The result, then, is a certain hollowness to the commitment to excellent teaching in community colleges. That is, the rhetoric is still there, but the working conditions which might foster it are not.

The issue was further complicated by the policy of open admission. Open admission to community college led to the community college being perceived as the place where those who have not succeeded in school would have a second chance to get the basic preparation they would need for work or college. Students whose basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics were inadequate but who had been passed on by their public schools would enroll in the community college and somehow gain the proficiency that they had not gained in all their school years up to that point.

That salvaging role might conceivably be carried out, if the complications were recognized. As Elizabeth McKay in Chapter Three pointed out, it calls for an approach that reconstructs the students' experience with learning the basic skills. That reconstruction can only be done when teachers have smaller, fewer classes, and more time to work with individual students rather than less time. In the emphasis on teaching that developed in the community college, however, the notion of emphasizing quality of instruction and the possibility of reconstruction of learning was lost to the emphasis on numbers of students and numbers of classes, for the purpose of keeping the costs of instruction low. In taking away the incentive to do research the community college eliminated a source of energy for teaching. In substituting additional classes and larger numbers of students for the time that faculty were not supposed to be doing research, community colleges failed to structure faculty working conditions so that it would really be possible for them to offer the educational reconstruction necessary for ill-prepared students.

The situation is further compounded by the model of relating to students that has developed in the community college. The assumption was that the university professors were interested in their research and, therefore, were not interested in their students' welfare, their growth in their studies. In contrast to this supposed callous, impersonal, uninterested university teacher, community college teachers would be interested, compassionate, accessible, ready to reach out to the community college student. The result is evident in the profiles of a number of community college faculty. Not having a reduced teaching load that would allow them to have the time to prepare, to do the type of reconstructive work necessary, they are also expected to be constantly available to help their students cope. They are asked to be responsive to aspects of their students' experience, their lives, their problems, to which--no matter how wise, sensitive, and experienced the community college faculty member is--he or she can offer very little of concrete value. To do so would necessitate taking a responsibility for the student that would end up making the student dependent on the faculty member.

One of the results is that in the profiles there is a fairly consistent picture of a sort of freneticism in the lives of community college teachers. They tend to live days very publicly. Any attempt at maintaining some solitude, some private time to prepare, to think, to write, to read, is looked upon with suspicion and skepticism. In many ways the community college faculty member in the ethos of being accessible and interested in the whole student is asked to be a type of social worker in an educational setting. The roles do not mix well, and there is abundant evidence in the interviews of teachers who have a serious intellectual commitment to their subject matter struggling to find ways to protect themselves against the teacher-as-social-worker model. They do so not out of callousness, but rather out of a sense of what they can and cannot do effectively.

There is a great deal of thoughtfulness about teaching in community colleges. The interviews we have done indicate to us that much of this thoughtfulness about teaching is characteristic of the faculty who have an attitude of mind towards their subject that decries the separation of research and teaching; we believe that the good teaching in community colleges is done by faculty who have an attitude of mind that would allow them to function at any level of the educational hierarchy. They stay active in their field, they write, they publish, they feel deeply the tensions between their understanding of their field and the preparation their students have for dealing with it. They affirm the intellectual essence of their work. To the extent that their community college confronts them with a structure that is in conflict with that attitude of mind, and to which they can not find a resolution, they are in conflict and frustrated. To them, the status of community colleges, the notion of power and opportunity may then become central. To the extent that they enjoy the integrity of the intellectual work they do, the nature of their work becomes more important to them than the sense of opportunity to move up that they may or may not have. Power for them is inherent in their ability to do intellectual work. To the extent that the community college does not foster conditions that facilitate their notion of their work as intellectual work and tries to substitute other notions, they are frustrated, and the issues of status, power, and opportunity may become paramount.

But the contradictions of American society put enormous pressure on faculty in community colleges who understand the basic intellectual nature of their work. The students tend to be the less wealthy, tend to be the students who have had less success in schools, tend to be more often children of working-class parents, tend to be students whose experience has been as part of the dominated rather than the dominant classes in the United States. Historically, because those in power cannot accept the notion that those who are dominated are so because of the advantages of domination to the dominant, they have to conceive of those who are dominated as different from them, and basically unequal. The sad, bald, inescapable, deeply troubling fact of the matter is that our liberal society long ago gave up on the notion of equality and substituted the liberal notion of equal opportunity. The notion of inequality dominates our education system. The early advocates of junior colleges did not believe that the students who were to go to them were equal to the student who would go to four-year schools, and because they were not equal they would get a different type of education. The problem with the notion of equal opportunity is not only that our economic, social and educational systems do not accomplish it, but more basically it allows us to perceive people as basically different from each other: smarter, dumber, talented, untalented, skilled, unskilled. In fact, there is every reason to believe that people's abilities are far more similar to each other than they are different and that, as human beings, we are so far from using the full capacities of our brains that the differences that there may be among people's capacities can not account for the differences in their performances. People's capacity to learn their native languages, for example, is evidence that competences are much more similar than they are different (Chomsky 1972).

This basic disbelief in equality among people's intellectual capabilities, the continued confusion of peoples' performances with their abilities, the continued attribution of differences in performance to inherited genetic factors, conflicts with every attempt on the part of community college faculty to teach and work with students in a way that sees students and people as basically equal in their competences and their potential. The belief in inequality, or in its ameliorating meritocratic version, supports the dichotomies that are carried out in community colleges between career and liberal arts education, between training and education, between skill and understanding, between manual and intellectual labor, between terminal and transfer education. Those educational dichotomies are deepened by the social forces of racism and sexism which further reinforce notions of inequality rather than equality.

In the midst of these dichotomies based on assumptions of inequality, the community college faculty members do their work. After the Second World War, with the influx of returning veterans supported by the GI bill, four-year colleges and universities were threatened with being swamped. Community colleges expanded at a high rate to relieve the pressure on four-year colleges. In the sixties a new sense of mission was added. Community colleges were seen as part of the official federal policy of providing equal educational opportunity. They were part of an enormous sense of social movement, ferment, and possibility. They became seen as an instrument of social policy which would provide equitable educational opportunity for all, no matter what race, social class background, or previous educational success. They would be an instrument of educational salvation.

Assassinations, the Vietnam War, the oil embargo, inflation, and the rising sense that our resources were limited, all combined to bring the social ferment of the sixties and early seventies to a grinding halt, to the point that we have remaining some of the forms of that ferment, but little of the substance. Faculty who were attracted to the community colleges as part of that movement were left grounded, struggling to hold on to some sense of imperative. Throughout the excitement of the 60s and early 70s while there was a sense of expansion and unlimited opportunity, and while all the energy was being devoted to creating new community colleges, very few people looked at the way community colleges were actually operating. Burton Clark (1960) and James Karabel (1977) presaged the critical reviews that would set in in the late seventies and early eighties.

But the ferment had only covered up the basic contradictions with which community college faculty had to contend. For example, English faculty were asked to teach language skills to students who increasingly did not have the skills associated with proficiency with middle-class standard English, because the students had been raised in circumstances in which they were geographically and psychologically separated from the use of middle-class standard English. Yet teachers of English in community colleges were expected to overcome patterns of language use that were reflections of deeply embedded social situations. They were expected to change "...the type of speech without simultaneously changing the situations, the living conditions, and the system of the symbolic interpretation of reality as a whole," which that language performance represented (Bisseret 1979, p.107).

Teachers of humanities were expected to offer their courses in history, literature, philosophy in a context in which community college students saw acquaintances with B.A. degrees failing to get the type of work normally associated with holding a bachelor's degree and driving cabs instead. A sense of panic about the worth of a college education and traditional collegiate subjects set in. Throughout higher education a spirit of vocationalism emerged (Hurn 1982) that undermined the sense of meaning that courses in humanities were to offer. Community college teachers of humanities searched for ways to connect their courses to career programs without sacrificing their sense of identity with a subject matter and a way of thinking that was central to who they were.

Teachers of the social sciences operated in an especially complicated situation in community colleges. Their field is devoted to raising to levels of consciousness our patterns of social behavior in the hope that knowledge will lead to a more just society. Yet they teach in institutions that confront them on a day-to-day basis with the result of inequitable social stratification in the United States. The social science fields have been intertwined with the notion of "progress" and to the extent that the social science teachers cannot feel their efforts as part of a progressive ethos, they are in conflict with what they had devoted themselves to being throughout their professional life. Some faculty leave in the face of such a conflict; others adjust their expectations; still others stay and devote their energy to matters outside of the college.

Math and science teachers stand at the crossroads between training and education.(See chapter fifteen, Sohn-Rethel 1978, for a full discussion of the role of mathematics in this dichotomy.) To the extent that students can learn math, they can progress in the sciences. To the extent that they can progress in the sciences, they can move from being a skilled manual laborer or technician to a person who is recognized and paid for working with his or her mind. The fact that that division between mind and hand is deluding does not keep our educational system from carrying it out. The problems math and science teachers face in community colleges is that they are supposed to deal with the consequences of choices and decisions that students may have made unknowingly years earlier. But the faculty work in a context of class load and schedules that make it improbable that they really can effectively deal with those consequences. The fact that the community college exists leads some students to think that their decision about what math to take, how far to go in it, how to contend with lack of success in it in high school, is not a serious problem, because they will have another chance to deal with the problem in community colleges. But education in math and science is cumulative, and bad habits, misconcepts, and practicing skills incorrectly all make it very difficult to overcome when you are twenty or thirty or forty what you could not deal with at sixteen. But that is the nature of the struggle that math and science teachers have to take on as they enter their classrooms each day.

The career education teachers we interviewed had to contend with a division between training and education that they themselves did not totally share, but which their college and sometimes their colleagues seemed to impose. Because they were deeply experienced in their respective fields of work they understood that their students would be oppressed by their work unless they understood its place in the larger societal context and unless they had a grounding in the academic subjects that undergird their technological fields, enabling them to go beyond the carrying out of rote duties.

While some schools we visited deliberately placed career education faculty offices next to arts and science faculty, such manipulations of physical space did not seem to overcome the psychological and intellectual chasm that was apparent in the way faculty in the community colleges conceived of themselves. Somehow career education faculty who understand the need for a complete sense of education for their students, who know that reading and writing ability is crucial to their students' success in their occupation, do not see themselves in the same light as their arts and science colleagues. Although they both share the same concern for a complete sense of education for their students, they do not seem to be talking with each other. There does not seem to be in the community colleges a vehicle for faculty who think seriously and deeply about the complexities of pedagogy, their fields of study, and the nature of their students, to come together. (Nor is there necessarily such a vehicle in the four-year colleges and university.) Faculty tend to work in isolation. Normally it is through writing and publication that such concerns are shared and connections are made. But because the community college has eschewed such activity as inappropriate for its faculty, community college faculty seem even more isolated as they attempt to contend individually with the diverse range of issues they face in their work.

The complexities that community college faculty will have to face in the future seem even more troubling. There does not seem to be any energy outside the college for bridging the dichotomies with which they have to contend. Higher education is becoming more stratified rather than less as elite, private college costs inflate. The gap between technology and the humanities seems to be broadening as phrases like "high tech" start to carry with them an aura of magic and mystery and its logic and language remains obfuscated for all but the initiated. Community college students are increasingly being forced to be part-time students juggling school studies in and around a work schedule. Studies reveal that the two factors which make attending community colleges less expensive than attending four-year colleges--the ability to live at home and commute to school and the ability to maintain a full-time job if necessary and still schedule classes in and around the job--are the very factors which negatively affect the students' persistence in schools (Astin 1982, p. 183). Yet these trends seem to be increasing.

The picture is further complicated by community college advocates themselves, in order to maintain public support, stressing the relative low cost of the education offered in community colleges. Given the nature of the students who attend community colleges and the complex educational history they tend to have, a reasonable argument could be built to say that more rather than less money spent per student in community colleges would be consistent with equity. The notion of "you get what you pay for" seems to be not applied to community colleges.

We learned from interviewing faculty and students in Massachusetts, New York State, and California--states with different histories in higher education, states with different systems of funding and governance of community colleges, states with widely different levels of funding for all public institutions of higher education including community colleges--that despite all the differences in finance, history, and organization, the faculty and students in the widely separated community colleges shared stories with strikingly similar themes. We talked with faculty member after faculty member who were trying to contend through their work with conventional notions of bright and dumb, talent, skill and understanding, education and training. Many were committed to freeing those notions of their conventional associations with social class, race, and gender. To the extent they are unable to do so, and are criticized for their failure, to a considerable degree they are being scapegoated for the contradictions inherent in our liberal society. The higher education establishment has grown accustomed to having community colleges exist to deal with the diversity of problems with which they contend and which frees four-year colleges and universities to concentrate on more traditional notions of collegiate education. To the extent that community college faculty are successful in developing a foundation for some individual students to have options that they might not have had, they are extraordinary teachers operating in among the most difficult of educational contexts in the United States.

Appendix I

TABLE 1.

Distribution of faculty and staff participants in community colleges in California, Massachusetts, and New York (one participant from Illinois). Not included here are pilot study participants (3).

	Faculty & Staff Participants	California 24		Massachusetts 26		New York 25		Other 1	Totals 76
		Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	Non-minority	
MEN	Liberal Arts	3	7	2	5	2	4	1	24
	Career		3		2	2	4		11
	Staff			3	2	2	2		9
WOMEN	Liberal Arts	1	6		3	1	5		16
	Career		2	1	3		2		8
	Staff	1	1	2	3	1			8
	Totals	5	19	8	18	8	17	1	76

TABLE 2.

Distribution of student participants in community colleges in California, Massachusetts, and New York.

	Student Participants	California 9		Massachusetts 8		New York 7		Totals 24
		Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	
MEN	Liberal Arts/transfer	1	1		1	1	1	5
	Career Programs	1	1		1		1	4
WOMEN	Liberal Arts/transfer	2	1		3		1	7
	Career Programs	1	1	2	1	1	2	8
	Totals	5	4	2	6	2	5	24

Appendix II

Written Consent Form

"The Work of Community College Teachers: A Study through In-Depth Interviews" *

I. We, Earl Seidman and Patrick J. Sullivan, are faculty members at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. We have been working for the last two years doing research based on in-depth interviews of community college faculty, staff, and students, primarily in Massachusetts. That research has led to the production of a thirty-minute film based on the interviews. The working title of the film is "In Their Own Voices: Working in the Community College". (The film project was sponsored by the Exxon Education Foundation).

Having completed work on the film, we are now turning our attention to broadening our study of the experience and meaning of teaching and working in community colleges. We have received a grant from the National Institute of Education to continue in-depth interviews of community college teachers, staff and students in California and New York State as well as with additional participants in Massachusetts.

II. You are being asked to be a participant in this study. We will conduct three, 1 1/2 hour in-depth interviews with you. The first interview will center around the question of how you came to work in a community college. The second interview will focus on what it is like to work in a community college. The final interview will explore what it means to you to work in a community college. While these questions will provide the structure of the interview, our intent in the interviews will not be to seek answers to these questions but rather to stimulate discussions of your stories and recreation of your experiences within the framework these questions establish.

III. The interviews will be audio-taped and later transcribed by a secretary. Our goal is to analyze and compose the materials from your interviews (you will be one of approximately a total of seventy participants) for:

(a) our final report to NIE
(b) a book we intend to write on teaching and working in community colleges based to a considerable degree on profiles of participants developed from their interviews
(c) a book we may do on interviewing as a research methodology in education
(d) journal articles
(e) presentations to groups interested in community colleges
(f) Finally, as faculty in a School of Education we may use the transcripts of your interviews for instructional purposes.

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*This study is supported by a grant from the National Institute of Education. Earl Seidman: Principal Investigator, Patrick J. Sullivan: Associate Investigator, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Ma. 01003

In all written materials and oral presentations in which we may use materials from your interview, we will use neither your name, names of people close to you, nor the name of your college. Transcripts will be typed with initials for your name, the names of people close to you, and the name of your community college.

> (It must be noted that in our original proposal to NIE, the names of three community colleges, one in California and two in New York State were mentioned as possible sites for our interviews. Although we will not use the names of your college in any written materials or oral presentations that result from this research, it is possible that someone could contact NIE, ask to have access to our original proposal, and try to identify the name of your college.)

IV. While consenting at this time to participate in these interviews, you may at any time withdraw from the actual interview process.

V. Furthermore, while having consented to participate in the interview process and having so done, you may withdraw your consent to have specific excerpts from your interviews used in any printed materials or oral presentations if you notify us within thirty days of your final interview.

VI. In signing this form you are agreeing to the use of the materials from your interviews as indicated in III. If we were to want to use the materials from your interviews in any way not consistent with what is stated in III, we would contact you to get your additional written consent.

VII. In signing this form, you are also assuring us that you will make no financial claims on us for the use of the material in your interviews.

VIII. Finally, in signing this you are thus stating that no medical treatment will be required by you from the University of Massachusetts should any physical injury result from participating in these interviews.

I, ______________________________ have read the above statement and agree to participate as an interviewee under the conditions stated above.

____
Signature of participant

____
Date

____
Interviewer(s)

Appendix III

TABLE 3.

Distribution of faculty and staff participants selected for profile develooment.

	Faculty and Staff Participants	California 11		Massachusetts 13		New York 9		Other 1	Totals 34
		Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	Non-minority	
MEN	Liberal Arts	3	2		4	1	2	1	13
	Career		1		2		2		5
	Staff				1				1
WOMEN	Liberal Arts		3		1		2		6
	Career		1	1	3		1		6
	Staff	1		1		1			3
	Totals	4	7	2	11	2	7	1	34

TABLE 4.

Distribution of student participants selected for profile development: returning women students.

Student Participants	California 2		Massachusetts 1		New York 2		Totals 5
	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority	
Liberal Arts/transfer						1	1
Career Programs	1	1	1			1	4
Totals	1	1	1			2	5

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